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RODERICK, THE ROVER; or, The Scourge OF THE Sea. BY T. J. FLANAGAN.



IT WAS THE FUNERAL PYRE OF THE SCOURGE TO BRITON'S FLAG.

Roderick, the Rover;

CR,

THE SCOURGE OF THE SEA.

A Romance of the Uncommissioned Privateer.

BY T. J. FLANAGAN.

CHAPTER I.

AN OCEAN WAIF—MURDER.

TIME: the spring of 1796. Place: a handsome residence in the (then) outskirts of Philadelphia. Dramatis Personæ: Mr. Julian Maffet, and his son, also Julian. Scene: Mr. Julian Maffet's favorite spot—his library.

Attention is called to the word "son," because Young Julian, as he was usually called, is just learning that he is *not* Mr. Julian Maffet's son.

"So you see, my dear fellow," the elder gentleman is saying, "when it comes to a matter of *claim*, you have none except what I choose to allow."

"And do you think, sir, that you have treated me justly? To tell me now, at the age of nineteen, that I am a waif—a stray—a being without a name or country—I, whom you have educated and encouraged in the most expensive habits? It appears scarcely fair!"

The excited young man paused for a moment in his fierce attack, and turning to the cool, calm, elder gentleman, who had been watching him with a sarcastic smile, said in a low but very earnest tone:

"I hope, sir, you will not think me ungrateful for—" Young Julian was a generous-hearted, impulsive fellow, and already regretted his outburst, but the elder cared no more for what he was about to say than what he had said, and with a wave of his hand interrupted the young man:

"Stop! As I have already told you, you and I were the only survivors of the wreck of the ship on which you were born. My adoption—my care of you, was a mere whim, as was my allowing people to call you my son."

"You owe me no gratitude and I want none. The subject is distasteful—let us drop it."

With the last word, the elegant and still fine-looking Mr. Maffet leaned back in his chair, and with a gesture indicating the decanter on a small table between them, mutely invited his companion to drink.

Disregarding the invitation, for once, the young man replied:

"No, Mr. Maffet; I can not—will not drop it yet; nor can I until my affairs—"

"Your affairs?" interrupted the other, in affected surprise; "why, I always supposed your affairs, by which you must mean your bills, were *my* affairs?"

"Stop a moment," he continued, as the young man was about to reply. "There is no need of further discussion. Everything can go on as usual. The money you require you shall have, but, had you not *demanded* it, you would not have been troubled with your history. However, no one else need know that."

"No, sir, things can not go on as usual!" returned Young Julian; "I am simply a beggar dependent on your bounty—one whom you may discard to-morrow as you would an old glove. Already my debts—"

The speaker, attracted by a noise behind him, stopped short, in his excited reply, and turning saw a servant, who had for some time been standing unnoticed in the open doorway.

"A letter, sir!" said she, when Young Julian turned.

"Give me a list of your infernal debts!" angrily demanded Mr. Maffet, as he received the letter from Julian, annoyed that the servant should have heard the young man's excited talk.

His own remark was made in an unusually loud as well as angry tone, and the girl heard it as she left the room, which was very unfortunate, for it caused the death of Mr. Maffet, and made Julian a fugitive from justice!

Bursting with importance, the servant could scarcely wait until within the precincts of the kitchen to announce:

"The two above are fightin' like divils about young Julian's debts. Faith, the young gentleman says he's beggared, an' the old one is ready t' turn him out when the debts are paid."

"Be careful, Mary. Are you sure of what you say?" asked the butler.

"Am I sure? Didn't I stand five minutes in the room listenin' t' that, an' worse?" was the indignant reply.

"Very well," said the butler, leaving the kitchen presumably for his own department, but really to go to the library door, now closed, to listen, and, when he came away, a few minutes later, there was a smile of satisfaction on his smooth—too smooth, looking countenance.

"It's the very thing!" he muttered, pacing the floor of the pantry; "whatever happens now the blame falls on him."

Young Julian, after the servant had delivered the letter, made out a list of his debts which he laid before Mr. Maffet, saying:

"It is no larger than usual, but circumstances are different now. However, the schooner, and my horses and jewelry, will more than pay everything—I, of course, will hereafter have no use for any of those things."

"Julian, you are a fool!" exclaimed Mr. Maffet. "Leave the list where it is, and don't come near me again until your temper—your reason, I should say, has returned. I am disgusted. Such nonsense is worthy only of an idiot!"

It was this last that the eavesdropper heard, and shortly after, when Julian quitted the house, the butler appeared and asked permission to remain away over night.

"Oh, hang it, *yes!* Go now, if you wish, Williams," replied Mr. Maffet, in an irritated tone.

"Thank you, sir, if it's no inconvenience, I will," said Williams, with a quick, sharp glance at his employer, as he departed.

"Hang the fellow!" What did he mean by *that*?" muttered Mr. Maffet, who had caught the look.

He knew absolutely nothing about the butler, except that the latter did his work well, and when it became necessary to engage a servant, Mr. Maffet invariably opened the negotiation with:

"Never mind about your references. If you can do the work, take the place. If you can't, you will not remain twenty-four hours; references will not induce me to retain you."

This was indicative of his mode of dealing with every one—servants, tradesmen, and dependents of every description. Provided they suited him—that is, did not annoy him, he cared not who or what they were, nor what they cost him, although he was much keener than those about him suspected.

Williams had been with Mr. Maffet just a month, at this time, and the odd glance the latter had caught, caused him to reflect that he knew nothing of him, but he was now annoyed about Julian, and quickly dismissed the butler from his thoughts—promising himself to look into that gentleman's character more carefully.

Mr. Maffet always carried out his intentions, but this time he failed to do so, for next morning he was found dead—dead with a fancy dagger, known to belong to Julian, buried in his breast, while the owner of the weapon was missing, and his bed had not been occupied the previous night.

CHAPTER II.

A HOT PURSUIT.

THE murder of the wealthy Mr. Maffet created a great sensation, and when the police arrived, they found the house crowded with neighbors, curious to get a glimpse of the interior of the residence, from which they had been so strictly excluded for the past seventeen years.

An investigation was held at once, and the stories of Mary, the servant, and Williams, the butler (who had returned early that morning), were quickly learned.

Everything pointed to Julian—the *quarrel* about money, his absence, and his ownership of the fatal dagger, all pointed to him as the murderer.

"But he would be a fool to leave such damning evidence of his guilt; no one but a lunatic would do it!" argued one officer, referring to the dagger.

"Perhaps he is mad!" volunteered another, adding: "His father, according to the butler's story, seems to have doubted his sanity."

Then came the finding of another, and important, piece of evidence showing the motive—the will, which, in a few terse sentences, bequeathed:

"All my estate, real and personal, to my adopted son Julian."

It was dated a few weeks previous and, although not of age, the death of the testator would put Julian in immediate possession of the funds which, according to the evidence, he needed so badly.

"That settles it; there's your motive!" exclaimed one, voicing the sentiment of all present.

"Yes, he was the only one to profit by Mr. Maffet's death," decided another.

"I wonder who the other relatives are? Does any one know?" was asked:

Each one looked expectantly at his neighbor, but no one—not the oldest of his servants, had the faintest idea of the dead man's personal affairs.

When Mr. Maffet first came to Philadelphia, he was accompanied by the boy, Julian, and a gigantic negro, and except that he was enormously wealthy, that was all his neighbors knew. He had no friends and only a few mere acquaintances; never accepted an invitation to visit a neighbor, nor allowed any one to visit him.

"Perhaps the negro could tell something," suggested one officer. "Where is he?"

"He has charge of the—of Julian's schooner," replied one of the servants.

"By George, we'd better hurry, boys!" exclaimed the officer in charge, "our man may be escaping in his boat!"

And, leaving one man in charge, the officers started at once, being informed by the same servant as to where the schooner *should* be found at anchor.

"It is a case of *should* be," remarked one officer, when, on reaching the river front, it was ascertained that the schooner "Teaser" had weighed anchor an hour previous.

"Curse the luck!" vociferated his superior, "we're a parcel of fools—gabbing like geese all the forenoon, while this fellow's been leisurely getting ready for a trip across the ocean."

"Why not follow him?" urged their informant: "He's only got an hour's start, 'n' there's my boat 'Nancy' all ready to weigh anchor."

Satisfied that his man was aboard the schooner—it was not likely she would sail without the owner—the officer in charge immediately decided to adopt the suggestion.

"We'll get in sight of her before we are out o' the bay," assented the captain, as the cutter, with every sail set that would draw, glided swiftly down the river.

An hour later the captain's assertion was proved good, for he pointed out "The Teaser" about a mile ahead.

The chase was now begun in earnest, and for three days it was continued without bettering the position of the cutter—the schooner appearing to draw away whenever it suited the fancy of those in command of her.

At length, on the third day out, another schooner hove in sight, astern of the cutter, and, as she proved to be armed, and very fast—overhauling the latter in short order—the master of the "Nancy" was ordered to hail her.

This was done, and the stranger hove to, demanding:

"Well? What d'ye want?"

"Tell him—order him, to go in pursuit of that vessel!" directed one officer.

"Yes, tell him who we are, and what we are after!" supplemented another.

The master of the cutter obeyed, but the captain of the schooner evidently had very little respect for the majesty of the law—as represented by the gentlemen on board the "Nancy."

To the great surprise of the officers, instead of obeying their orders, he returned a scornful refusal, and bore away.

During the delay caused by the fruitless conversation with the stranger, the "Teaser," having crowded on more sail, had gained such an advantage, that the guardians of the peace despaired of ever reaching her, and decided to give up the chase.

"Don't ye do it, gentlemen!" counseled the master of the "Nancy." "We're sure t' over-haul her, if ye stick t' it long enough."

"Stick to it! Confound ye, haven't we been stickin' to it long enough?"

"Just one day more!" urged the master; "I won't charge ye nothin', if we don't overhaul her then."

"Very good! You catch that schooner in twenty-four hours, or we return, and you get no money."

"That's it sir—just fur all the world like 'twaz in a book," admiringly assented the master of the "Nancy," and the old rascal turned away, and went forward, chuckling and grinning most outrageously.

The "Teaser" disappeared during the night, but was discovered next morning lying hove to, and, to the surprise of the officers, made no attempt to escape.

The cutter was quickly brought alongside the schooner, and the officers boarded her, but, to their surprise and disgust, a thorough search of the vessel only proved that Julian was *not* on board.

Questioned as to his motive in leading them

such a long and useless chase, the negro sailing-master of the Teaser professed not to have known that they were in pursuit. How should he? He was out on a pleasure-trip with the young gentleman they had found in the cabin—a friend of his employer. When the young gentleman referred to came on deck, he confirmed this statement, and the disgusted officers started home.

The master of the Nancy stuck his tongue in his cheek, and the negro grinned as the vessels parted.

CHAPTER III.

"I AM THE MAN THEY SEEK."

Two days after the murder of Mr. Maffet.

On board the schooner Hope, Captain William Bainbridge—afterward the famous commodore—is conversing with a fine looking, elegantly dressed young man, who has applied for a berth on the schooner.

"As what?" asks the captain, looking curiously at the applicant.

"Oh, anything!" replies the other, with reckless indifference.

"Humph. Captain, first mate, cook, or what?"

"Eh? Oh, I beg your pardon, sir! I understood you were short a man—" began the young man, as though awakening from a dream.

"I am—a man before the mast," interrupts Captain Bainbridge. "If you can (and want to) fill the bill, the place is yours."

He had no idea that the stranger would accept the offer, but the offer was accepted, and, both amused and perplexed, the captain led the way to the cabin.

"What name?" he asked, taking out the shipping articles.

"John Smith—or Brown; in fact any name you like, sir, that no one can lay special claim to it," replied the new hand, after a moment's hesitation.

"See here, sir!" said Captain Bainbridge, suspiciously; "what reason have you for concealing your own name?"

"None. If I knew it, I should be glad to tell it!" replied the other earnestly, and noticing the doubt and amazement pictured on the captain's face, continued:

"The captain of yonder schooner has known me since childhood, and can vouch for my ability as a sailor, but he cannot tell you my name."

The schooner referred to had arrived an hour previous, and was lying just astern of the "Hope." It would require but a few minutes to hail her, and ascertain the truth of the stranger's odd story before sailing.

"Very good!" returned the captain. "Since you've no choice, we'll make it plain John Smith. There's little chance of special claim to that. Sign."

"The new hand signed the shipping articles, and the captain, continued:

"Now get your kit, and be lively, for we sail within two hours, and there's plenty to do. I'll hail your late captain in a few minutes."

Smith looked confused when his kit was referred to, but brightened at the mention of his former captain, and with a polite—though unsailorlike bow, left the cabin. Within a half-hour, he returned with two sailors from the other schooner, who put aboard and stowed his chest—*Smith merely looking on!*

Captain Bainbridge, who was on deck superintending the stowing of the last of the cargo, noted the respectful manner in which the two sailors of the other schooner treated his new hand, and, also, that as soon as they were gone Smith went to work with a will, although it was plain that handling freight was not an every-day matter with him.

The owner of the Hope now came on board, and the captain being engaged with him until the last moment, was compelled to forego his intention of making inquiry regarding the new hand, for when the owner went ashore, the schooner was in the hands of the pilot and already under way.

Nothing of interest occurred until the Hope was fairly out to sea, when a cutter was seen apparently in pursuit of a large schooner, the former straining every nerve to overtake the latter, which appeared to be playing with her pursuer.

The Hope was a very fast sailer, and soon overhauled the cutter, passing within hailing distance.

"Schooner ahoy!" came the hail, and Captain Bainbridge making the usual reply and inquiry, was informed that the cutter was in pursuit of a murderer on board the schooner ahead.

"Well—what do you want?" asked Captain Bainbridge.

"I don't want anythin'," replied the captain of the cutter, "but this here gentleman (indicating one of the occupants of the cutter)—who's a law officer—says, as you're so fast, he wants you to overhaul and hold that schooner until we come up."

The speaker finished with a broad grin, evidently knowing how this demand would be met, but taking a fresh order from the representative of the law, continued:

"He says, as your armed [the 'Hope' carried four nine-pounders], all you've got to do is fire a gun 'n' she'll heave to."

"Indeed! Well, tell Mr. Officer-of-the-law that these guns are for protection only. Good-day, and a pleasant voyage to you," and turning to the first-mate, Captain Bainbridge continued:

"Lay her off a couple points, Mr. McKinsey; we'll show this fellow who directs our movements."

While conversing with the captain of the cutter, Captain Bainbridge had noticed the ironic smile with which Smith listened to the report of the pursuit of the murderer—a smile that changed to contempt, when it was suggested that the Hope could overhaul the other schooner.

Smith was now standing forward, gazing intently at the fleeing schooner, which had spread all her canvas, evidently alarmed at seeing the cutter speak the Hope, and going forward, Captain Bainbridge said:

"You appeared to be interested in our talk with the cutter, Smith. Do you know anything of the affair?"

"I do, sir," replied Smith, almost defiantly, and then, changing his tone, added:

"I left New York the morning after the murder."

Captain Bainbridge started on hearing this, and recalling the queer circumstances connected with Smith's shipping, sternly demanded:

"Is that why you could not remember your name?"

"No, sir, it was *not*!" was the firm reply.

"I believe you," rejoined Captain Bainbridge, after a minute's study of the frank, open countenance of Smith.

"I have not, however, told you all," continued Smith, touched by the captain's confidence.

"While I do not know my name, the people in that cutter would tell you it is Julian Maffet, but it is not, nor have I any claim to it."

"You know them—and that schooner also, if I mistake not?"

"I do—both. They will be allowed to overhaul the schooner, to-morrow, but the man they seek will not be found—will not be there."

"How do you know all this?" demanded the captain, again suspicious.

"Because the schooner is leading them a wild-goose chase, and *I am the man they seek!*"

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOPE AND THE PRIVATEER—IMPRESSED.

SOMETHING in the way Smith made the startling announcement that he was the man sought for by the officers in the cutter—in other words, a murderer, caused Captain Bainbridge to say:

"There is something back of this. Explain."

"There is little to explain, captain. The evidence against me was simply overwhelming, and only by disgracing—if not absolutely ruining—some of my best friends, could I prove my being with them during the entire night of the murder."

"And the name?"

"The day previous to the murder, I learned that I was only the adopted son of Julian Maffet, the murdered man, and then swore I would never again be known by that name."

"I'm afraid we're in for some dirty weather, captain," interrupted the mate at this point, breaking off further conversation.

With a friendly nod to Smith, Captain Bainbridge turned to attend to his vessel, which quickly required the attention of all hands.

Orders rung out short and sharp until sail was shortened to suit Captain Bainbridge's ideas, but the gale had scarcely begun before the topmasts were bending like whips, and, always careful of his spars, the topsails were first reefed and then furlled, the foremost in the work, and most reckless to be so, being Smith.

The Hope was bound for the West Indies, the gale was blowing her in that direction, and Captain Bainbridge preferred driving before it to lying to, so his sail was reduced very gradually, but at length the schooner was scudding along under nothing except a balance-reefed foresail.

For thirty-six hours the storm raged, and then, as it began to abate, Captain Bainbridge gradually spread his canvas—anxious to obtain the full benefit of the still-favoring gale. This

work, like the gradual reduction of sail, was very perilous, but, again, the foremost in every instance was John Smith.

When the storm had subsided to an eight-knot breeze, and the weary seamen had an opportunity for rest and refreshment, considerable conversation naturally ensued regarding the storm. The unanimous opinion of officers, as well as men, was that John Smith was a splendid sailor, but, even when Captain Bainbridge declared it was his suggestions, as well as actions, that had twice saved spars and canvas, he appeared to be totally indifferent; praise or blame, it was all alike to John Smith.

The weather continuing good, with strong favoring breezes, the Hope was rapidly nearing her destination, when just at daybreak one morning, a brig was discovered on the lee beam, about one mile distant.

"I don't like her appearance, Mr. McKinsey," declared Captain Bainbridge, when he came on deck.

"She carries eight guns, and at least thirty men—" began the mate, when he was interrupted by the firing of a gun and the hoisting of an English flag aboard the brig.

"Heave to?" exclaimed Captain Bainbridge. "See you hanged first! Mr. McKinsey, fire a gun at her! Our colors are up."

In doing this against double the number of heavier guns, and three times the number of men, Captain Bainbridge, (then but twenty-two years of age,) exhibited that spirit of dauntless resolution which became more and more conspicuous in after life, until it finally placed the flag of a commodore at the mast-head of his ship.

The brig had evidently expected to intimidate the schooner by exhibiting her colors, and, surprised at this unexpected resistance—more especially as the shot fired by Captain Bainbridge's orders hulled her—stood off for a few minutes.

Captain Bainbridge, however, did not wait for the brig to again bear down, but, firing rapidly and accurately, hulled her again and again, as well as cutting away considerable rigging—the schooner, through skillful handling, escaping almost all the return fire.

The vessels soon drew closer and, although it necessitated risking a raking of four guns, Captain Bainbridge determined to endeavor to cross the brig's stern, and rake her.

Just as this determination was to be enforced a shot from the brig struck the mainmast and, while not seriously injuring the mast, upset Captain Bainbridge's calculations, as the large splinter which it knocked out struck the sturdy mate, rendering him unconscious.

It was very unfortunate. The captain could not direct the fire of his guns and handle the schooner at the same time, and he stood looking, for a moment, the picture of perplexity.

"Perhaps I could serve you until he recovers. I was captain of the schooner the cutter was chasing," a quiet voice remarked at his elbow, and turning quickly, Captain Bainbridge found John Smith at his side.

"You know what is wanted. Can you handle her?" he asked, brightening at the suggestion.

"Yes, sir, I can!"

"Very good, but be careful," warned the captain.

Both vessels were sailing on the same tack, and close together. Suddenly, the Hope backed her maintopsail long enough to allow the brig to draw a half cable's length ahead. Then she filled, rounded-to, and gathering headway, shot across the stern of the brig—Captain Bainbridge firing his double-shot guns, (round and grape-shot,) in passing.

The range was so short that the execution was terrifying—enough so to cause the captain of the privateer to strike her colors!

As it would not have been legal to take possession of his prize, Captain Bainbridge contented himself with telling her commander that if his employers wanted the Hope, they must send some one else to take her.

He then repaired the slight damage the Hope had received, and proceeded on his voyage, leaving his astonished, and humbled assailant in a rather deplorable condition.

Aside from McKinsey—who was merely stunned—the Hope had but one member wounded!

"That was beautifully done, Smith," complimented Captain Bainbridge, after they were under way, "but, I'm a little curious to know how it was done. I heard no orders."

"I gave none," replied Smith. "To avoid any misunderstanding, I arranged with the men to move by signal, and did not put down the helm until everything was certain to work as you ordered."

"'Twas well done—exceedingly well done!"

Smith made no response—in fact looked rather uncomfortable, and Captain Bainbridge continued:

"There is no time now, but, as soon as we are in port, we must have a long talk."

That talk, however, did not take place, for next day, about noon, the *Hope* was hove to and boarded by the English cruiser, *Indefatigable*, commanded by Sir Edward Pellem—a heavily armed, square-rigged ship.

Resistance to the command to "heave to" was useless, and escape impossible—there being no wind.

The boarding officer commenced by undertaking to impress the first mate, McKinsey, on the ground that, from his name, he must be a Scotchman, but Captain Bainbridge, who knew what was about to take place, had given the mate a hint, and he had armed himself.

As he swore to kill the first man who approached, and it being immaterial to the boarding officer whom he took, he ordered his crew to seize the nearest man. This happened to be John Smith, who, notwithstanding he fought like a lion, was placed in the boat, almost unconscious, and carried to the cruiser.

It was the usual thing, in those days, for English cruisers to stop American merchant vessels, and impress, seamen to keep up their full complement—but 1812 stopped that insolence, and injustice.

Merchant captains, as a rule, made no objection to this tyrannical system, but Captain Bainbridge had taken a great liking to Smith, and furious over his loss, swore to the boarding officer that he would stop the first English merchant vessel he met, and take a man in exchange.

The boarding officer laughed at the threat, but within a week it was put into execution.

That day, however, England, in seizing—and afterward maltreating John Smith, made an enemy, who for years thereafter pursued her merchant and naval service with unrelenting vengeance.

CHAPTER V.

FLOGGED.

TAKEN aboard the *Indefatigable*, John Smith proved an unfortunate selection. Questioned, he knew neither name nor country, and would give no reason, for which he was put in irons and fed on bread and water—to improve his memory.

As this appeared to have no effect at the end of a week, he was brought before the first officer who, detecting a certain earnestness underlying the sullen, invariable, "I don't know," gave him precisely the same name he had borne on the *Hope*, and turned him over to the boatswain.

For three months John Smith's life was a hell on earth—or rather on shipboard, which is worse, as it is not as easy to get away from it.

The English seamen knew his story and worried him, but John Smith's fist was only too ready, and bread and water and irons became familiar—and then came the cat!

Four dozen lashes on the bare back for knocking down a petty officer, who made a remark, which in those days—and often in these—results in the use of at least one pistol.

"I wonder if that will tame him?" remarked one officer.

"Not at all; there's too much of the tiger in him," replied the master, who much disliked the American.

He was right. Up to the flogging, John Smith was merely a bear—after the flogging, he was a tiger thirsting for blood, but his claws were carefully concealed!

When the surgeon thought his back in fit condition, he was ordered to report for duty, and did so almost cheerfully.

The seamen, who felt sorry for tormenting and goading him until he had become desperate, showed their sympathy in various ways, but John Smith paid no attention to any one or any thing, except his duty, and that he now performed to the letter.

This, of course, was soon observed, and one of his former tormentors, who had overheard the remarks of the officers on the day of the flogging, said to another, who had also heard them:

"It looks as if the master wor wrong, Jim."

"Don't you go too much on that, Jack," returned his friend; "I wouldn't care t' be in the maintop with him, if I wor you, in a squall at night. Some one 'd lose the number of his mess, ye can lay t' that!"

John Smith's exemplary conduct was bring-

ing him into favor on the quarter-deck day after day, and, when he evinced a desire to know more concerning the British Navy, books for the purpose were placed at his service.

Then came another flogging—the captain of the fore-top being the victim this time.

It was for the use of the same epithet, that Johnson not only knocked down, but kicked in the ribs of one of the sailors, and when he was brought up to the grating, stripped to the waist, there was a grin smile on his face which never left it until the boatswain's mate was ordered to cease, although his back was one mass of raw, quivering flesh—such as one sees in the slaughter-house after the hide has been removed from an ox.

John Smith, who had, of course, witnessed the brutal punishment, was the first to say a kind word to Johnson. Both had suffered for the same offense, and it created a fellow feeling between them, which soon ripened into a warm friendship—notwithstanding the fact that the former took the place of the latter as captain of the fore-top.

Although there was considerable jealousy over the appointment of the new captain of the fore-top, none was openly expressed, for the reason that no man for whom John Smith had been punished in the past, cared to encounter him again. Moreover, Johnson, having heard some murmuring, swore to brain the first man who showed a disposition to annoy his friend, and the consequence was that the foretop of the cruiser was handled in a manner that delighted her officers.

The *Indefatigable* was now slowly cruising toward home, and in twenty-four hours would be anchored in the Thames, but during the night—about two bells in the middle watch, (one o'clock A. M.)—the cry "All hands on deck!" brought those below to the assistance of their fellows above, in putting the ship in condition to weather a storm, that had sprung up so suddenly as to catch her almost entirely unprepared.

It so happened that John Smith and Johnson were among the watch on deck, when the order was given to furl the topsails. The former, as usual, led the way up the rigging, and soon all were at work in the tops.

Suddenly, an extra heavy gust of wind struck the ship, the topmasts was swaying like coach-whips, and seeing the danger, the first officer shouted through his trumpet:

"Lie down! Down by the back stays! Down for your lives!"

All but two profited by the warning, gliding to the deck with the velocity of the wind.

Scarcely were they down, when rope after rope, cord, lanyard and stay parted, and the fore-topmast fell into the sea, carrying with it John Smith and Johnson.

"Stand by to clear away the quarter boat!" shouted the first officer, but in a moment, realizing the impossibility of a boat living in the sea that was running, the order was rescinded, and the captain of the fore-top and his friend were left to their fate.

CHAPTER VI.

TARDY JUSTICE.

SIX weeks after the *Indefatigable* lost her foretopmast, and the two men working upon it, a man whose garb, gait, and weatherbeaten countenance proclaimed him a sailor, alighted from the stage-coach from Philadelphia in New York.

The new arrival looked about curiously, and then took a rough pen and ink chart from his pocket which he studied intently for a few minutes, after which he walked leisurely, but in a roundabout way, to where the schooner *Teaser* was lying at anchor in the Hudson.

"Schooner, ahoy!" he hailed in a deep, hoarse voice, that startled the gigantic negro, lying half asleep on the after-cabin hatch.

"Send a boat ashore," he continued, as the negro sprung up, and looked at him.

"What yo' want?" demanded the negro.

"To come aboard and talk to ye. Lively, Caesar—time presses!"

The negro started on hearing his name, and, prompted by curiosity to know more of this stranger who knew him, stepped into the small boat, which he stopped within a few feet of the shore, and demanded:

"How yo' know me?"

"Do you know this?" counter-questioned the other, drawing a signet ring from his pocket, and holding it toward Caesar.

With a cry of mingled joy and surprise, the negro drove the boat ashore, and springing out, extended his enormous hand for the ring.

"No—no! Wait 'til we're aboard. I've a lot

t' say t' ye," said the other, slipping the ring into his pocket.

Caesar looked threatening, but the cool, determined attitude of the other, as well as his evident ability to take care of himself—for, in his own way, the stranger looked as powerful as the gigantic negro—impressed him, and he said, sullenly:

"All right. Yo' come 'board; then tell."

Once aboard the schooner, and having ascertained that they were alone, the stranger explained:

"Ye see, Caesar, this here ring—keep yer hands off—is my authority from your master, and I'd be a fool t' give it up, 'cause why, if you cut up ugly 'n' got mutinous, it's all I've got to depend on."

"Where marse?" began Caesar, submitting to either the superior intelligence, or stronger will, of the other, but was interrupted with:

"Stow yer jaw, Caesar! I'll do the talkin' just now. Now you know this here ring?"

The negro nodded, and the other continued:

"Well, the owner of this 'ere ring wants a certain iron-bound chest put aboard this 'ere schooner, 'n' taken t' him t'-night. Ye knows that chest, 'n' how t' get it, don't ye?"

"No much trouble 'bout dat; but where—"

"Now, Caesar, just wait 'til we're under way; then I'll tell ye where we're bound for. Can ye get a couple o' good hands? It's only a short voyage. Ye can! all right! Now let's arrange about the chest, 'n' then you go look after the hands, while I'll look after the ship."

A short but earnest conversation followed, after which the negro went ashore, leaving his companion in charge of the schooner.

In the early part of the evening, the negro returned with two seamen, and, after putting them on board the *Teaser*, returned to the shore, accompanied by "Dick"—as the sailor who boarded the schooner had instructed Caesar to address him.

Next morning, it was discovered that the residence of Julian Maffet had been broken into during the night, but for what purpose was a mystery, as the executor, after an examination of the house, declared nothing was missing.

Shortly after this, a rumor spread through the city that young Julian was innocent of the crime imputed to him. A revengeful woman, the proprietress of a gaming house (under pretense of performing an act of tardy justice) had appeared before a magistrate, and declared that young Julian Maffet, with two friends, had spent the entire night of the murder at her house; that his friends, on learning from the butler, early next morning, that Julian was accused of the crime, had persuaded him to go away until the real culprit should be discovered; thus avoiding the necessity of revealing the character of the resorts they frequented. The reason given for this wish for secrecy was that both of Julian's companions were dependent on very wealthy and strictly religious relatives, who would discard them were it to become known where they had spent the night.

It was, therefore, only to save the reputations of his friends, that young Julian consented to leave the city.

Asked to substantiate her story, the woman named the companions of Julian on the night of the murder—and thus accomplished her object by compromising both to ruin the one who had incurred her anger. This one denied the story point-blank, but the other frankly admitted the truth, and told how it was arranged that Caesar—who almost carried his master from the house—should lead the officers off the track.

To make everything certain, the negro was sent for, but the messenger returned with the information that the *Teaser* was not at her anchorage—although known to have been there up to a late hour the previous night.

"Why not look up the butler? It seems odd that he should have been able to warn us so early—before the murder was actually discovered, if I remember aright."

This was the suggestion of Frank Mordaunt, the young man who had admitted the truth of the woman's story. It was instantly adopted, and search begun for the ex-butler.

Within a week Williams was under lock and key, and, when placed under arrest, the watch of the murdered man was found in his pocket! This, and the warning he gave the young men, before he had himself appeared publicly on the scene of the murder, proved the means of extorting a confession that he himself was the murderer.

The murdered man's watch had proved a white elephant, being set with rubies and diamonds, and so valuable that Williams feared to

offer it for sale. He was, therefore, forced to retain what proved the strongest evidence of his guilt, and the means of placing the rope around his neck.

CHAPTER VII.

THE IRON-BOUND CHEST.

WHEN the confession of Williams was made public, there was at least one heart that was filled with joy—that of Gertrude Mordaunt, a pretty girl of sixteen, and sister of one of the young men for whom Julian Maffet sacrificed himself.

"Now, Frank," she said, "you took Julian away and must bring him back."

"You are right," returned Frank; "I will start after him at once. If the vessel is in port at New York, I'll have him back immediately."

He meant to do so, but unfortunately, Frank was of a procrastinating nature, and delayed his departure until the second day following. During that time the schooner Teaser had arrived and departed.

On her arrival the schooner was met by him whom we now know as John Smith, but toward whom the negro sprung with the joyous cry:

"Oh, Marse Julian!"

"Not so loud, Caesar!" cautioned the young man, smilingly, and turning to Johnson, asked:

"You got the box all right?"

"Yes, sir. It appears the executor couldn't open it without bustin' it, 'n' he was afraid t' do that."

"Well, I've no fear about doing so—it's mine. Break it open at once. We must get in some stores, and be off again as soon as I have examined the contents."

The opening of the iron-bound chest was a matter of no small difficulty, but at length it was accomplished. When the top was pried off, a number of flags were revealed, and these being removed, it was seen that the chest contained a confused mass of gold coin, representing every civilized nation, and gold ornaments of every description.

It was evident from the astonishment manifested by the young man, that he did not suspect the amount or character of the contents, of what Mr. Julian Maffet had often jestingly told him would be his (young Julian's), "treasure-chest."

The negro, however, exhibited no surprise, and while the others were still staring at the chest, picked up a small note-book lying on top of the heap, and handed it to Julian, saying:

"Dat tell where gold come from."

The young man took the book mechanically, and opening it, saw a list of names of ships, with latitude and longitude, and a date and amount each. On the first page were the words: "Captain Roderick."

"What does it mean?" asked Julian, a suspicion of the truth forcing itself upon him.

"Guess him leab dat for you to find out," replied Caesar, with a broad grin.

It was evident that nothing could be extracted from the negro, and quite as evident that either Mr. Julian Maffet had discovered the treasure of some freebooter chief, or had been one himself—with the odds very much in favor of the latter being the case, since the entries in the note-book very much resembled the writing in the will.

Some of this suspicion showed in young Julian's face as he asked:

"Why were all those flags put in, Caesar?"

"Fill up box to top—no make noise den."

"Well, well!" exclaimed Julian impatiently. "Now that we've got it, let's set about our work. You understand me, Johnson?"

"Ay, ay, sir! I'm all ready for your orders."

"Very good. I'll give you a list of stores, and other things we need. We must not depend on New York for too much. Powder, shot, muskets, cutlasses, and all such stuff, must to a great extent be purchased here. Be liberal with your gold, and close with your tongue, and, when you are through with your purchases, see if you can pick up a dozen good men. It will not do to ship too many, now."

Having given these verbal instructions, Julian made a list of what was required, which he handed to Johnson with a handful of gold, saying:

"Have these pieces changed before you buy anything."

"Now, Caesar," he continued, when Johnson had gone ashore, "what am I to do with you?"

"Me go whar you go, Marse Julian," replied the black giant, with pathetic simplicity.

All he knew was that "Marse Julian," was his master, but that was enough for the devoted serving man.

"Well—so be it," but, no more Master Julian, Caesar!

Captain Roderick's gold furnishes the means, and his name shall be that of the man who avenges the wrongs of John Smith!

"John Smith! John Smith—the tool—the fool of the Englishmen!—impressed—flogged—disgraced!"

"Curse them! They shall yet tremble at that name!"

The speaker's eyes blazed; his fists clinched, and his whole frame shook with passion so great, that the usually stolid negro shrunk back, muttering:

"Him bad as ole Cap'n Rod'rick. Take him's name, take spirit, too. Looks like reg'lar debil."

And, indeed, the appearance of the once gay and careless Julian Maffet, fully justified Caesar's words.

For a few minutes, the expression of his countenance was demoniac, but recovering himself he continued:

"But it's John Smith's turn, now, and the past shall be washed away in the tyrant's own blood, for to-night we start on a voyage of vengeance!"

Then, as his eyes fell upon the black giant, the speaker's mood changed, and he asked:

"Caesar, I've an idea that you've seen some blood shed, eh?"

A low, deep-toned laugh accompanied the reply:

"Um mus'n' tell—mebbel!"

"Well, I've no wish to pry into the past. Whether you have or not, matters little. I am going ashore, and you must look after the stores. Have that strip of canvas bearing the new name, nailed across the stern."

Without waiting for a reply, the speaker quitted the cabin, and did not return until late that night.

"Stores all aboard?" he demanded.

"Yes, sir," replied Johnson.

"Men?"

"A dozen, sir."

"Then get under way, at once!" and Julian Maffet disappeared below, and in a short time the beautiful schooner had started on the voyage of vengeance.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DISAPPOINTED SEAMAN.

THE good ship Royal Oak, Captain Knowles, lying in Boston Harbor, had completed the loading of her cargo, and only awaited her papers and a favorable wind, to set sail for home—England. She was a beautiful six hundred ton specimen of the shipbuilder's art, one to delight the eye of a mariner, originally built for the service of the king, but for some red-tape reason rejected, after being made ready to have her guns mounted.

The Royal Oak was to carry some passengers on her return trip, all arrangements for their reception had been made, when suddenly everything was upset by the mysterious disappearance of Captain Knowles, as the following conversation between a party of three ladies, who had come down to the wharf on the day before sailing, will better explain.

The oldest of the party, Mrs. Drexel, a wealthy widow of about fifty, an aunt of the youngest of three, is addressing a lady some years her junior, to whom she is expressing her opinion of the Royal Oak.

"All you say is undoubtedly true, my dear Mrs. Warren," she is saying, "and as the widow of a sea-captain, yourself, your words should and do have great weight. The vessel is new and beautiful, and has made a very fast passage, but it was her first voyage, and she may not return so safely. You know it is rumored that that terrible John Smith, is now on the Atlantic Ocean, having tired apparently of cruising in the West Indies—and something warns me not to allow Gertrude to sail in the Royal Oak."

"But, Mrs. Drexel, why should the Royal Oak be more unsafe than any other vessel?" asks Mrs. Warren, a smile breaking the sad expression of her still beautiful face.

"Because the John Smith seldom allows an English vessel of value to escape for any length of time. If too strong to be captured, it is almost certain to be badly injured, and, in most instances, is in a sinking condition when he is driven off."

While Mrs. Drexel delivered her opinion of the Royal Oak, the party came to a halt within a few feet of a man who stood leaning against a pile of lumber, and resting his head on his hand, was gazing intently at the subject of their conversation, which was perfectly audible to him,

and which, from the expression of his countenance, seemed both amusing and annoying until the name "Gertrude" was mentioned; then he appeared deeply interested.

"Yes," continued Mrs. Drexel, "since my poor sister's death, when Gertrude Mordaunt was confided to my care, I have watched over her like a mother, and I must confess to a dread, which you may call superstitious, against intrusting her to that ship—a ship from which the entire crew deserted shortly after her arrival, and now it is said the captain has done the same."

While the widow was speaking, the man leaning against the lumber shot a quick glance at the two ladies—Gertrude, the youngest, had wandered away to the other end of the wharf—and when she ceased, advanced a couple of paces, raised his sea cap, and bowing, said:

"Pardon me, madame, but from your conversation—to which I have been a not altogether unwilling listener—I am led to believe some of your friends contemplate engaging passage by the Royal Oak?"

"They have already done so," replied Mrs. Drexel, gazing curiously at the well-knit, graceful figure, and refined though deeply sun-browned features of the intruder.

"Then permit me to say, madame, that I think your feeling of distrust perfectly justified. The Royal Oak is, indeed, an ill-omened ship, and no relative of mine would be allowed to sail in her. We sailors are perhaps a little too superstitious; still, as I have said, no relative of mine should take passage in that vessel."

The young man—he appeared to be about twenty-five to twenty-seven—spoke hurriedly, but very earnestly, and, although he said "we sailors," it was apparent from his language, and the cut and quality of his clothing, that he was not an ordinary seaman.

"Why do you believe the Royal Oak to be so untrustworthy?" asked Mrs. Drexel.

"For the very reasons you have yourself stated, madame, and—"

Gertrude, who had been looking at the beautiful schooner lying close to the Royal Oak, now turned and came rapidly toward the group. The young man interrupted himself as she approached, and with a hasty glance at his watch, said:

"I trust you will excuse further reply to your question, but I have already overstayed my time, and must return at once," and raising his cap, the speaker hurried away.

"A strange mortal!" laughed Mrs. Drexel, turning to her companion.

"Very strange," assented Mrs. Warren dreamily, and then, as if rousing herself from a trance: "Do you not think we should heed his warning?"

Mrs. Drexel was of that class of beings who are more pleased by opposition to, than acquiescence in their views, and her opinion had undergone a radical change in the last few minutes.

"Not at all," she replied, "he is probably some disappointed seaman, seeking to injure the owners of the vessel. Come—here's Gertrude—let us go home."

The "disappointed seaman" had meantime hurried to an adjoining wharf, and entering a small boat apparently in waiting for him, was rowed to the schooner mentioned above.

"Well, captain, what think you of the Royal Oak?" asked a heavily-built man, in the garb of an officer, after saluting the other as he stepped on deck.

"Never mind that, Johnson! I have work—work of urgency and importance for you—come below!" replied the captain, leading the way to the cabin, where, pacing the floor with a quick, nervous step, he issued his orders:

"Go to Wright, (the agent of the Royal Oak,) and tell him that you will take command of that vessel. I cannot—at any rate, I will be uncertain up to the last moment, and that will not do; so he must make the change at once."

"You will then manage to have it circulated, that since the disappearance of Knowles, the command of the Royal Oak has been offered to, and refused by, at least one captain—Hold! that will not do! It may prevent her sailing for some time. Instead of circulating it, have that information conveyed to a Mrs. Drexel—you will learn her address from Wright. Buy some intelligent, confidential servant to tell the story, and to say that there are some queer rumors regarding the character—seaworthiness—anything—of the Royal Oak—anything that will prevent her friends from sailing in that ship!"

"Here! take this, spend it freely, and be quick."

With the last words, the speaker threw a handful of gold on the table which separated him from his subordinate, plainly too excited to care for the amount, or what became of it.

CHAPTER IX.

RODERICK, THE ROVER.

It was late, within an hour of midnight, when the second in command of the schooner Nameless returned to the vessel, and stood before his captain, who, as the reader has doubtless ere this suspected, was the famous, or infamous captain of the John Smith—waiting to make his report.

All that evening, Captain Roderick had acted like a man torn by powerful conflicting emotions—at one time pacing the floor with hasty, nervous tread, then sinking into a chair beside the curiously inlaid table which occupied the center of the cabin, where, with his head resting on his hand, he would become buried in thought, only to spring up in a few minutes and resume his nervous pacing—the workings of his face betraying the conflict going on within.

When Johnson knocked for admission—none dare enter the cabin without doing so—the captain sunk into the gorgeous chair beside the table, and allowed a full minute to elapse before giving the required permission, and another before raising his head to address his lieutenant, but when he spoke his voice was calm, even cold, and his face as expressionless as stone.

"Well, you have succeeded?"

There was a hint of displeasure in the tone of the question, which the lieutenant well understood.

"Yes, captain, as far as the change in command goes," he replied, at the same time placing a letter on the table.

"And, so, you have returned at this hour, to confess your inability to frighten a woman from doing something which she already half fears to do?"

The captain's voice was still calm and even, but Johnson winced like a man who had received a sharp blow.

"Beggin' yer pardon, captain, but if it's the old 'un ye speak of, she's got a curious way of showin' it. Wimmen is queer cattle anyhow, 'n' I'll allow t' know nothin' about 'em, but, if ye'll just give the order, I'll engage t' put 'em aboard here inside two hours, or burn the house, or—"

"Or cut their throats, or anything else requiring brute strength and no brains," interrupted the captain, with a mocking laugh, and then, his mood changing, continued in a more kindly tone:

"Sit down, Johnson, and tell me what occurred. There must be some reason for your ill success."

"Thankee, sir! Ye see, I went first t' the agent, 'n' by the time I got through there it was dark—which was all the better for me. Then, I went t' this 'ere Mrs. Drexel's, 'n' after a bit got hold o' one o' the servants—an old chap that's been all his life there. It was touch 'n' go, but, by careful steerin' 'n' two Spanish doubloons, I got him t' promise t' scare her out o' lettin' t' others sail in the Royal Oak. He kept his word—I could hear it all—'n' gave the ship a terrible character 'n'—"

The lieutenant stopped short looking much confused.

"And Roderick the Rover a worse one," laughed the other. "Go on, Johnson!"

"Well, as I was a-sayin', captain, the old chap earned his money, but, Lor' bless ye, it was on'y waste o' words. That old woman just laughed at him; the more he said, the worse she got, 'n' finally she guessed as how she'd go along, too."

"By Heavens, Johnson, we are not going to lose that ship, to humor that old woman's whims! If she were going alone—"

The captain stopped suddenly, like one who had said more than he meant, but a glance at his lieutenant seemed to relieve him, and he asked:

"Where do they live—what kind of a place?"

"Much the same as where you did, sir—a bit out o' the town. A lonesome spot it is for three women, 'n' them havin' and on'y two or three old men t' look after 'em."

"Good! Is Riggs on board yet?"

"Yes, sir."

"Send him down."

Taking this as a signal of dismissal, the lieutenant arose to go on deck, but was stopped by the question:

"When are you to sail—morning or afternoon?"

"Afternoon, sir, for the convenience of the passengers. Mrs. Drexel's a friend o' one o' the owners."

"Will your papers be ready in the morning?"

"All ready now, sir. Wright's got 'em."

"Very good! To-morrow morning, early, you will receive your papers, and a pilot at the same time. As soon as you do, weigh anchor. Understand me—there must be no delay!"

"I understand ye, sir," replied Johnson, with a knowing look, and a broad grin, that caused a grim smile to play, for a moment, about the mouth of the pirate chief.

"Poor little Gertie!" he exclaimed, with a sigh, as Johnson left the cabin, "she must be quite a woman, now."

A knock announcing Riggs, prevented further reflection, and having received the desired permission the second officer of the Nameless—a tall, sinewy, and rather handsome young fellow—entered.

"Riggs," said the captain, "there are three ladies who are desirous of sailing in the Royal Oak, to-morrow, but they must be prevented from doing so. Johnson will tell you who they are, and where to find them."

After ten o'clock to-morrow, they may do as they please, but if these ladies attempt to start before that time, you must prevent it—how, I leave to your ingenuity, only there must be no violence, Riggs. It's a delicate affair, and you are the only man capable of handling it. Take what money you want"—pulling out the drawer of the table—"and one or two good men."

Riggs, flushed at his chief's commendation, helped himself to a few pieces from the confused heap of gold in the drawer, and having received an order to "send Caesar," bowed and withdrew.

It was a busy night on board the Nameless, although not a sound could be heard by a person ten yards on any side of her.

A heavy thump announced Caesar, and caused the Rover to smile, as he bade his gigantic follower enter.

"How is your patient, the captain, getting along?" he asked.

"Him pretty well, sar. Thought him jaw-tackle broke, but on'y little sore," replied Caesar, showing his teeth.

"You shouldn't have hit so hard," said the captain, a smile breaking the usual repose of his countenance, also.

"Captain Knowles, him fool, sar," explained the negro; "told him shut up, or break him jaw."

"And, like most people, he got into trouble because he couldn't keep his mouth shut," laughed the captain, adding in a more serious tone:

"Well, Caesar, we have no use for Captain Knowles after sunset to-morrow. Have you a place where you can leave him until that time?"

"Yes, sar."

"Very well; then get him ashore before daylight, and arrange to have him released at dusk—but be sure of your people. Good-night!"

It was now long past midnight, and the captain was about to lower the swinging lamp of solid silver, which had evidently, from its shape and ornaments, illuminated some more sacred place, when his eye caught the letter laid on the table by Johnson.

"Not through yet," he muttered, as he opened the letter, which was as follows:

"I send you with this, a boy who is under my control and who is *very anxious* to go to sea. I am willing he should sail with you, and hope you can make use of him. I may add that I am also willing, if not precisely anxious, that he should never return!"

"As your lieutenant will inform you, everything has been arranged as you desired."

"The scoundrel! For what does he take me?" exclaimed the captain, boiling with indignation, and after a moment's thought struck a gong suspended from a beam overhead.

"Pass the word for Riggs!" he said to the man who answered the summons.

"Bah! I'm getting thib-skinned to allow such a fellow to annoy me," he muttered, while waiting for the second officer; "one-half of them curse the captain of the John Smith, while the other half bless him—but I'll teach this fellow a lesson—Come!"

Riggs, looking rather sleepy, entered with the last word, and pointing to the writing materials on the table, the captain said!

"Sorry to break your rest, but there are two short notes to be written and taken ashore by you to-morrow morning. As it is well that you should know their contents, you may as well write them."

"The first will be to Mrs. Drexel, in which you will say that the captain of the John Smith presents his compliments, and hopes she will know how to appreciate the next warning she receives—if she is lucky enough to receive one."

"That you will have placed in her hands at noon to-morrow."

"The second will be to Wright, the agent of

the Royal Oak. Tell him that I shall, after seizing that vessel, acquaint the second mate of his treachery, and that he will undoubtedly convey the information to the owners. Further, that if he ever comes within my power, I'll have him flogged while there's breath in his miserable carcass!"

Snatching up a sea cap, the captain left Riggs to write the letters, and going on deck inquired about the boy Johnson had brought aboard.

"He's asleep forward, sir," replied one of the men.

"It's as well. Send him to me as soon as he is awake," and the captain walked forward to inspect the work that had been and was being done in preparation for the morrow.

"That means he's agoin' t' be up all night," whispered one man to another.

"Yes; an' a double allowance of rum at six bells (3 A.M.)," replied his comrade.

Both were correct in their surmises, or assertions. The captain's eye appeared to see everything, but, though there were some alterations, there was little censure, and the rum was served as balm to it.

CHAPTER X.

MORE OF RODERICK THE ROVER.

A LITTLE after nine o'clock next morning, a messenger from the agent of the vessel came aboard the Royal Oak with a bundle of papers for Captain Johnson, and immediately after the pilot arrived.

It was pretty generally known around the wharves, that the Royal Oak was to sail about three in the afternoon, and it was, therefore, a matter of some surprise to the spectators to see the vessel weigh anchor and go to sea before ten in the morning.

When the order was given to weigh anchor, the second mate ventured to remind his new superior that there were passengers to come in the afternoon.

"Agent's orders, Mr. Knight," replied Captain Johnson; "man the windlass at once."

That ended the mate's protest, and in a short time the anchor was stowed, the ship cast, the lighter sails set, the courses had fallen, and the bows of the Royal Oak were throwing the spray before her.

Half an hour after her departure, the second officer of the schooner Nameless came aboard, and a few minutes later that vessel followed the example of her late neighbor, and also her course.

Queer rumors regarding the Royal Oak began to spread through the city during the afternoon—especially after a heavy, cumbersome affair, which Mrs. Drexel called the family carriage, was driven down to the wharf shortly before three o'clock.

"No ship here, madame," announced the coachman, alighting, and going to the window.

"That explains that letter," remarked Mrs. Warren.

"And that beautiful schooner is gone, too!" exclaimed Gertrude.

"Drive to Mr. Wright's office!" ordered the angry widow, and as the coachman turned away, added, vengefully:

"He shall give ample explanation of this outrageous conduct, or—"

She did not finish the sentence, but it was quite plain that Mr. Wright would shortly be in the vicinity of considerable uncomfortably warm water.

It is more than likely that the agent had foreseen what the afternoon would bring forth, and quite probable that he had seen the carriage approaching. At all events, the footman who was dispatched to summon Mr. Wright to the carriage, returned with the information that the agent had left town, and would not return for two or three days.

It was after this, that Dame Rumor's tongue began to wag most vigorously.

First, it was reported that the new captain had run away with the Royal Oak, and as the agent could not be found, it was soon added that he had aided and abetted this piratical action.

Then it became known that Mrs. Drexel had actually received a letter from the captain of the notorious John Smith, and finally Captain Knowles made his appearance, declaring that he had been kidnapped and kept a prisoner for the past three days—until that morning, on board a schooner, which had been lying close to the Royal Oak, and during that day in a hut outside the city.

When the last-mentioned facts became known, every one interested, and a great many more who were not, became very much excited. All doubts as to the character of the schooner vanished, and a council of the shippers being called,

it was suggested that one or more armed vessels be sent in pursuit, but no one willing to undertake the task could be found.

"But the John Smith never attacks an American," said one of the shippers, urging the master of an armed brig to accept the handsome reward offered to the ship or ships which would follow and protect the Royal Oak.

"Very true, sir," replied the old sea-dog, secretly pleased at the troubles of the merchants; "very true, sir, an' a very good reason why no American should attack her. Many a one of us owes the Prince of Pirates a good turn."

"The Prince of Pirates?"

"Ay, so some have called Roderick the Rover, because never a woman has been ill-treated—or man either, once the action was over—by him or his crew, while vessels of all nations have been helped during, and after storms, an' against pirates 'n' privateers."

"How during a storm?" asked the merchant, incredulously.

"By coming aboard with twenty men in my case," was the prompt reply of another seaman.

"I'd lost my main-topmast first," continued the champion of the John Smith, "and then 'way goes the mast itself over the side. Three hands went over with the topmast 'n' three more followed. Then the fore-topmast went, 'n' we were on a fair course for Davy Jones's locker when one o' the hands spied the John Smith."

"Hanged if he wasn't bearin' down t' us just ez easy ez though a nor'wester was only a six-knot breeze," added the mate of the first speaker, addressing the admiring circle of listening merchants and seamen.

"Well, resumed the master, "we thought ther' was no need o' bailin' him an' ther' wa'n't—though he took desprit chances t' help us. When he come close I could see him in the mizzen shrouds an' hear him, too, for he's a voice like a French horn—'n' then I could make out a lot more jumpin' into the riggin'—what for I couldn't make out until the John Smith shot by us like a streak, 'n' her captain 'n' twenty men came jumpin' an' tumblin' into the riggin' 'n' over the decks. It was the closest shave, 'n' finest bit o' work ever done—though it cost two o' 'em broken arms, an' many a bruise, an' it saved me from bein' a dead man, or a beggar."

"What did he do?" asked one of the merchants.

"What didn't he do! First, he set some of his men t' clearin' away the wreckage, while the rest were put at the pumps. Then he comes 'n' says, cap'n, you 'n' yer hands must be tired out—we'd been thirty hours on deck—so, says he, you'd better go below 'n' turn in—just think o' that!

"Well, the seven men I had left, 'n' Jack here, turned in, but, of course, I couldn't, so I stayed on deck watchin' him 'n' his men workin' like beavers, 'til finally, when the gale went down, the Polly was able to hold her own."

"Then we lay to, an' the John Smith comes alongside with rum an' provisions enough for a regiment, an' what was still better, spars for jury masts—an' they rigged 'em, too."

After that story, all the gold in Boston would not tempt a seaman in the room to injure Roderick the Rover, although there were several not over-scrupulous masters of heavily-armed vessels present.

So it happened that the Nameless pursued her course, and the Royal Oak, unmolested, and neither vessel was ever seen in Boston Harbor again.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BUCCANEER MIDSHPMAN.

THE Royal Oak and the Nameless did not come together as soon as their respective commanders desired, and had arranged that they should, owing to the heavy weather which was encountered almost from the outset.

As soon as Riggs had come on board, and made his report regarding Mrs. Drexel and Wright, Captain Roderick gave orders to get under way, and retired to the cabin, leaving his second officer in charge of the schooner, as soon as she was clear of the harbor.

"Send for that boy that came aboard last night," said the captain, as he passed below.

During the morning, he had been too busy to carry out his intention of talking to the boy, but now everything was running smoothly and he was curious to see the lad whom the rascally agent was so anxious to get rid of.

In a few minutes there came a gentle tap at the door, and, with the word, entered a tall, manly looking youth of fifteen or sixteen, whose countenance, if not strictly handsome, wore that expression of honesty and boldness, which is

always pleasing—especially to such as the keen-eyed commander of the John Smith—for already in pure audacity, the canvas covering the real name of the schooner, had been removed.

"So, you are anxious to become a sailor, my lad," said the captain, pointing to a chair on the other side of the table. "What is your name?"

"Jack Durant, sir, is my name, but I have never said I was anxious to go to sea."

"Indeed! Then somebody is a most infernal liar. But that's nothing strange. Are you related to Wright?"

"He is my uncle, and trustee, I believe, of some property for me," replied the youth slowly, as if in doubt.

"Why do you say 'you believe'? Don't you know positively, whether he holds any property in trust for you?"

"No, sir. My mother died when I was an infant, and my father, when I was about five years of age. Then Mr. Wright, who was married to my mother's sister, came and brought me to Boston, where I have since lived with him."

"And how was he treated you?"

"Very kindly until my aunt died three years ago."

"And since then?"

The youth hesitated a moment before replying: "Fairly well."

Captain Roderick who had measured the lad's caliber, and saw he was not one to complain quickly, easily surmised what "fairly well" might cover.

"And so you were not anxious to go to sea?" said the captain musingly, thinking whether he would best help the lad by sending him back to Boston.

"Not particularly, but anything is preferable to living with him. I have met with several queer accidents since my aunt died, and they have led me to think that I am in somebody's way—especially as my aunt used to tell that my father was wealthy, and that there was considerable property coming to me."

The quiet, easy way in which this was said, caused the usually self-possessed Captain Roderick to stare in admiring surprise at the youth, who, after a momentary pause, added carelessly:

"As I never expressed any anxiety to become a sailor, and came aboard this vessel simply to look at it—I was invited by your lieutenant at the suggestion of my uncle—I presume my being here, is another of those queer accidents."

For the first time since the Teaser became John Smith, Captain Roderick laughed loud and long, and startled at hearing such an unusual sound issuing from the cabin, the second officer, who had descended to inform the captain of the threatening appearance of the weather and was at the cabin door, refrained from knocking, and returned to the deck.

"Well, my lad, I'm inclined to think you are right," assured the captain, when he had recovered his gravity, "but it is my intention to place you on an inward bound vessel—that is, unless you prefer to remain, which I would not advise you to do."

"Well, I don't see any use in returning to Boston; it will only occasion another accident," replied the youth, adding:

"But I should like to know something of the character of this vessel—I perceived that she changed her name as soon as she left Boston."

All traces of mirth had vanished from the captain's countenance before the speaker had finished, and his voice was startlingly stern as he replied.

"That was done, sir, by my orders, and no one belonging to this vessel is allowed to question what I direct. If you return to Boston, it does not concern you. If you join the crew, you must do as the others do—obey without asking why?"

Jack Durant was certainly built of better mettle than any of the seventy-five men aboard the John Smith, for, unlike them, he never flinched for a moment under the piercing gaze, and stern words of the unaccredited Rover.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he calmly replied, "but I was, and am on all other points, ignorant of your rules, and asked the question merely through curiosity. As far as I care or am concerned, the vessel may belong to his Satanic Majesty, and be sailing to his kingdom, but, if you have no objection, I should prefer to remain on board of her. It will be less wearing on the nerves than watching for those queer accidents."

The air of supreme indifference with which this was delivered—and it was plainly unaffected—again proved too much for Captain Roderick's gravity, but this time the second officer,

(who was again at the cabin door,) knocked—the appearance of the sky would not admit of any further delay.

"Remain here," said the captain to Jack, as he left the cabin, after hearing the second officer's report.

He evidently wished to continue the conversation, but the storm, which burst soon after his appearance on deck, allowed little opportunity for talk, and when Jack, who had fallen asleep reading, was aroused by his entrance in the evening, it was only to be told that the steward would shortly bring his supper, after which he could amuse himself or turn in.

"You may occupy the first officer's state-room for the present. Good-night! Don't come on deck," said the captain, as his lithe, active form disappeared through the doorway.

He was hardly on deck before the steward entered with a tray, and placed a tempting meal on a side-table—to which Jack did full justice.

It was blowing great guns outside, the rain was coming down in torrents, accompanied by deafening peals of thunder, and dazzling flashes of lightning.

"By Jove, I'm in clover!" exclaimed Jack, as he contrasted his situation in the magnificently furnished cabin, with that of those above on the wave-washed, rain-drenched deck.

When daylight came the storm showed no sign of abatement, nor did it through the day or following night, but on the third day the wind subsided to a strong breeze, with a heavy sea still running.

The large crew of the John Smith, had enabled her commander to keep fresh men constantly on deck, and he, himself, seemed tireless. Every fresh watch found him on deck, and under his care and skillful handling the schooner escaped without the slightest injury.

Notwithstanding his good fortune, Captain Roderick grew more moody and uneasy each succeeding day, and to all but the twelve deserters from the Royal Oak, the reason was obvious.

"I don't see why he should look so bloomin' serious—we're as safe as houses," remarked one of the English seamen, referring to the captain, who at daybreak on the morning of the fourth day, was seen nervously pacing the deck, stopping every few minutes to take a sweeping, searching survey of the horizon.

"Why, ye blasted fool, d'ye think it's us he's bothered about? It's the R'yal Oak he's lookin' for—an' by the eternal, there she is!"

While the old seaman was speaking, the sun had burst through the haze with which the breaking of day had been attended, revealing the Royal Oak to the people of the John Smith.

"At last!" exclaimed the Rover, with a sigh of relief, and turning to the second officer, said:

"Fire a gun, and hoist the cat!"

As he spoke the captain descended to the cabin, where he threw himself on a lounge, and in five minutes was sound asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

THE WARRIOR AND THE JOHN SMITH.

"HOIST the cat!"

A queer order truly, and one of which none of the crew of the John Smith knew the meaning, except that it was followed by raising of a flag—one such as no man among them had ever before seen; a bloody cat-o'-nine tails on a white field.

The hoisting of this unique flag was a signal that the ship to be engaged was English. When a French privateer, or a pirate, was encountered the American flag was hoisted.

Although the flag was raised, and the gun fired, in obedience to the captain's orders, the usual beat to quarters did not follow, nor did the crew of the John Smith appear to expect it, although they crowded on deck at the report of the gun, and stood gazing expectantly at the Royal Oak, which shortly after hove to.

"Cap'n's mind is easy now; he's gone t' take a rest," remarked one of the crew, as the schooner bore down on the vessel, that was her prize from the moment it left Boston Harbor.

All eyes were now fixed on the Royal Oak—even those of the lookout, who felt relieved on discovering the vessel so vainly looked for since leaving Boston, and no one noticed a vessel about two miles astern of the schooner.

Captain Johnson, standing on the poop of the Royal Oak, saw the stranger, and the danger, and groaned—that is, for a moment, and then his imprecations upon the intelligence and eyesight of the crew of the John Smith in general, and the lookout and second officer in particular, astonished his second officer, who was standing within earshot.

"It's an English man-o'-war brig," he groaned, and turning to the mate:

"Curse me, if they won't be on board before them blind-eyed bats know what's what!"

This was said when the brig, which had all her canvas spread, was within a mile of the slowly approaching schooner, and Captain Johnson's vocabulary was exhausted.

"But that means that we're safe!" muttered the mate, gazing in astonishment at his superior.

The latter was taking another survey of the John Smith and, perceiving her crew were still unconscious of their danger, said—without lowering his glass:

"Fire a gun, Knight, and fire it right at that schooner! Mebbe the blasted idiots 'll look 'round then— Hold on! Some one's awake at last."

"Some one" was Jack Durant, who had come up to get a breath of air before breakfast. He saw the vessel astern, and judging from the way the people of the schooner were crowded forward, that the stranger had not been noticed, called the second officer's attention to her: thus the John Smith escaped being taken by surprise.

Within five minutes the Rover was on deck, and, as there was no evading his stern inquiry as to why he had not been aroused before, he was quickly in possession of the facts. He made no comment at the time, but, bending an expressive glance on Jack, ordered the lieutenant to beat to quarters.

At the first tap of the drum the groups forward dissolved as every man repaired, with hastened bustling activity, to his well-known station. The officers made hasty but strict inquiries into the condition of their several commands; topmen and sail-trimmers were enumerated, shot slugs and stoppers handled, the magazine opened, the arm-chests emptied, and pikes and boarding-axes given out.

Then succeeded that deep and grave silence which renders a crew at quarters a sight so imposing, even to those who have witnessed it from boyhood, during which the captain kept his gaze bent on the rapidly approaching stranger.

The "Prince of Pirates" was bareheaded, the schooner moving slowly but ready at a minute's notice to clap on sail and escape, and until the leathern boarding-cap which lay at his feet was on his head, the crew knew that their commander had not decided whether to fight or fly.

The brig, which it was quickly discovered, carried more guns and heavier metal than the schooner, gained rapidly until within a half-mile of the latter, when she fired a gun, and at the same instant the English ensign was seen flying from her gaff.

Further than to order the reefs in the fore and mainsails shaken out, the commander of the John Smith paid no attention to the summons to heave to.

The schooner now began to hold her own, and no sooner was this apparent than two shot came whistling over her stern, one of which barely missed ending the career of her commander.

"That settles it—it's fight!" was the general but quiet exclamation among the people of the John Smith, as they saw the captain put on the boarding-cap, and, a moment later, the order to heave to proved them correct.

That the Englishman mistook this for a sign of submission, was evidenced by a faint cheer which came across the water, but they were quickly and terribly undeceived.

Still standing motionless on the poop, with his eyes fixed on the brig, studying every movement of those on board of her, the Rover waited until she was within a half cable's length; then, in a voice that rung through the schooner, came the order to the man at the wheel:

"Down! Hard down!"

The topsails had been previously filled, and without waiting for the word the sail-trimmers sprung to the sheets, the schooner wore round short on her heel, and then gathering headway, shot across the bows of the brig, delivering a broadside of six guns in passing.

The havoc wrought at such a murderously short range was necessarily terrible, but, notwithstanding the confusion which followed, the brig was well handled, and being, moreover, a quick sailer, her commander kept his luff, and, coming up on the weather quarter of the John Smith, took the wind out of her sails.

Both vessels now fired their broadsides, and finding, after several exchanges, that broadside for broadside, the heavier metal, and greater number of guns of the brig, gave her too great advantage, Captain Roderick hauled on board his tattered courses, and running

ahead on the wind, was a half mile away before his absence was discovered.

The discharges of the cannon had been hot, close and incessant, and in a few minutes both vessels were so enveloped in smoke, that the discharge of the broadside of one served to mark her position to the other, so that when the guns of the John Smith were silent, the people of the brig supposed she had struck, and although it would have been but a paltry victory for twenty-four eighteen-pounders to silence twelve fourteens, they cheered lustily, as they had done all through the cannonading, while the people of the Rover performed their murderous work in silence.

When the smoke lifted, however, the John Smith was discovered in the act of wearing round, and a minute later bore right down on the brig, her lee rigging and fore-castle crowded with men ready for the dash on board.

The running fight had brought both vessels within easy gunshot of the Royal Oak, and now, to add to the disappointment of the Englishman, this vessel, still carrying the English flag, began throwing shot across her decks, and one striking his already wounded foremast, it fell over the side, carrying with it the maintopmast, leaving the brig an incumbered wreck.

Seeing it would be worse than useless to prolong the struggle, the English captain struck his colors—just in time to prevent the crew of the schooner from boarding.

Short as the exchange of broadsides had been, the destruction to both vessels had far exceeded the supposition of their respective commanders, and after the brig had hauled down her colors, a sudden puff of wind, which at any other time would not have started a royal, brought down the badly wounded mainmast of the John Smith.

It was too late, however, to be of any help to the brig, especially as the Royal Oak was now bearing down in obedience to a signal from the schooner.

The brig, which was called the Warrior, had suffered most severely in her hull, many of the shot-holes being on and below the water-line, and when the Rover boarded her she was making water fast.

"To whom have I surrendered, sir?" asked the captain of the Warrior, as his victorious opponent approached.

He was new on the station, but was satisfied that there was something very irregular about the character of the vessel alongside—and yet, neither captain or crew acted like pirates.

"To whom have you surrendered?" echoed the Rover Captain. "Why, to the John Smith—know ye not the cat?"

"The John Smith?"

As this exclamation burst from the lips of the English captain, he started back as though suddenly confronted with some terrible monster, casting a startled glance first at the flag indicated, and then at the handsome, elegantly attired young man before him.

"Surely this can not be the terrible pirate himself? Perhaps he had been wounded—possibly killed, during the engagement," thought the captain of the Warrior, and the youth, and quiet, even respectful, demeanor of the other, lent assurance to the idea that he was a junior officer.

While these thoughts were flashing through the brain of the English captain, his conqueror's keen eyes were taking in the damage done to the brig, and noticing some of her crew at the pumps, the latter asked:

"Are you making water very fast Captain—?"

"Molineaux, sir."

"Yes, I fear we *are* making water fast. Your fire at close range was very severe on our hull."

"It would appear so," returned the other, and as his eyes roved over the heaps of dead and wounded, asked:

"Where is your surgeon?"

"We found him dead over his medicine-chest—hit by one of your solid shot," replied Captain Molineaux.

"Durant!" called the Rover, and as Jack advanced, continued:

"Take the gig and bring one of our surgeons aboard, immediately!"

As the boat shot away, he explained:

"We have two surgeons, and but little for them to do."

"Thank you. We need one badly. By the way, is your captain wounded?"

"No more than you see," replied the Rover.

He touched what looked like a pin scratch on his cheek, as he spoke, and almost laughed at the astonishment of the English commander, who exclaimed:

"Is it possible that you are—that *you* are the captain?"

"It is so!" replied Captain Roderick, removing his boarding-cap, and bowing (ironically low) to his prisoner.

"You will, of course, understand," he continued, (with a smile as ironical as the bow) "how inconvenient it would be to wear my *horns and tail*, while boarding you."

Captain Molineaux was a gentleman, and, a brave man, himself, he could appreciate that quality in another, who had shown himself as kind as he was courageous.

Coloring deeply, he extended his hand impulsively saying:

"I beg you will pardon my rudeness, but there are so many infernal stories about you, that I forgot myself. You have acted the part of a gentleman, and—pirate-privateer or not—I am proud to take the hand of so generous a foe!"

"'Twere well for England, were all her commanders such as you," returned the Rover, with a bitter smile, as he took the hand of his frank and impulsive prisoner, not, however, without perceiving that the latter unconsciously, perhaps, regarded his action as a condescension."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHALLENGE.

CAPTAIN MOLINEAUX did not understand the Rover's words, but he saw the bitter feeling of his captor, and rightly inferred from the words, that England was paying for the injustice of some of her servants, but he had no desire to inquire into the matter, and to change the current of the other's thoughts, asked:

"What disposition do you intend making of us, Captain Smith?"

Smiling at the name bestowed upon him, the Rover replied:

"When you are ready to proceed, I shall make you—if you will—the bearer of a message to England, and also the means of transporting a few prisoners to their homes. As you probably know, my usual custom is to sink the vessel, and land the prisoners myself, but this is an exceptional case."

"I must leave you for the present. When you are ready I will give you the message."

And, with a bow, the captain of the John Smith entered his gig and was pulled away to the Royal Oak, leaving Captain Molineaux wondering why his should be the exceptional case, but he was no more puzzled than the man who had decided that it should be so.

On the way to the Royal Oak, Captain Roderick was buried in thought—endeavoring to account for the sudden and strange regard which had taken possession of him on meeting the English captain, and which had caused him to decide not to sink the Warrior.

True, the Englishman was a frank, manly, fine-looking fellow, and only a few years older than himself, but the same was true of many others whose ships had gone to the bottom, and when he stepped aboard the Royal Oak, the Rover was still without a satisfactory reason for the feeling referred to.

"How many prisoners, Johnson?" he asked, as that gentleman came forward to welcome him.

"Ten, sir—the two mates and eight men."

"Send them aboard the brig."

Johnson stared hard for a moment, but catching the frown that was gathering on the brow of his superior at even this momentary, and quite excusable, delay, hastened to obey.

"Prisoners, captain?" he asked, giving the order to have the men brought on deck.

"No; let the first mate send the boat to the schooner by our men, when they are through on the brig. Where is he?"

"In the cabin, sir. Sent him 'n' t'other one below so's not t' hurt their feelin's when we fired on the flag," was the grinning reply.

"How d'ye find her?" asked the captain, when the prisoners had pushed off.

"A splendid sea boat, sir; easy on her riggin' an' lively in a sea. I believe we could've run away from ye—an' that's more'n any craft I ever laid eyes on afore could do with the John Smith."

"I trust you are right—I believe you are, and it is well it is so, for the schooner's days are numbered," said the captain, looking thoughtfully and a little sadly at that badly damaged vessel, from the low deck of which everything, except the foremast had been swept by the deadly broadsides of the heavily armed Warrior.

"He must carry heavy guns—they'll come in handy," remarked Johnson.

"Twenty-four eighteens. As you say, they will come in handy. You had better heave to alongside of her, and get them aboard, together

with all their powder and shot. I'll go ahead of you."

Descending into his gig, Captain Roderick returned to the Warrior, where he was received by Captain Molineaux, to whom he said:

"While I am willing you should return with your ship in the best possible condition, it is necessary that I should have guns. You mount a very pretty battery, and I must take it, but your Government shall have an opportunity to get them back."

"As both ship and crew are at your mercy, it is, of course, unnecessary to ask my consent," replied Captain Molineaux, quietly, but apparently a little put out at losing his guns.

"You will understand me better when we part," said the other quietly, adding:

"And now I will put more of my people at work and hurry your departure."

By noon next day the Warrior was in readiness to sail. The men of the John Smith returned to their vessel—on which, as yet, no repairs had been made—and having informed their captain that it was intended to make sail on the brig after dinner, he ordered his gig and sent for Captain Molineaux.

"I have sent for you to dine with me," said he, "and to take my message to Sir Edward Pellem."

"Sir Edward Pellem!" exclaimed the other, "Do you know him?"

"Not in the sense you mean; yet I do know him, and have excellent reason to remember him. But, never mind that now; dinner waits."

When the meal was finished, Captain Roderick escorted his guest to the gig, where they parted with a warm and hearty grasp of the hand.

"But your message—we have forgotten that," said Captain Molineaux, as he was about getting into the boat.

"No, I have not forgotten it," returned the Rover. "Seat yourself and I will give it to you. It will repay you for the loss of your guns, or rather prove that they are not lost, since they can be regained."

"You will please tell Sir Edward Pellem that the John Smith is no more—she will be in atoms long before you can meet him—and you should have credit for her destruction, but that if he has any desire to recapture your guns, let him be off Cape San Vincent six months from today, and when he sees that flag"—(pointing to the mast-head of the schooner)—"with the bloody scourge he loves so well to use, there he can find your guns!"

"Give way there!"

Before the astonished messenger could speak, the boat shot away, and when Captain Molineaux gained the deck of the Warrior, his friendly foe had disappeared from view.

The brig was immediately got under way, and amidst cheers on both sides started for England.

Captain Molineaux kept his glass fixed on the John Smith all the afternoon, and saw boats constantly passing between her and the Royal Oak.

Suddenly a streak of flame flashed from the decks of the schooner, springing fiercely from sail to sail. A vast cloud of smoke broke out of the hull, and the deadened roar of artillery followed. To this succeeded, for a time, the awful, and yet attractive, spectacle of a burning ship—the whole terminating in an immense canopy of smoke, and an explosion that caused the sails of the distant Warrior to waver. It was the funeral pyre of the scourge to Britain's flag.

When the cloud had lifted from the ocean, the John Smith had disappeared—nothing could be seen but Royal Oak.

CHAPTER XIV.

CAPTURE OF CÆSAR.

MRS. DREXEL was what her friends termed a firm, determined woman, while her enemies asserted she was pig-headedly obstinate—which, at all events, was not very polite, even if true.

Having once taken passage by the Royal Oak, she announced her intention of sailing in that vessel, or one belonging to the same firm, and no other.

She had been balked in her first attempt, and was determined to carry out her original intention—even when, at the end of three months, Wright (who had returned at the promised time, and had managed to pacify her), informed Mrs. Drexel, and others more deeply interested, that the Royal Oak had been captured by the John Smith.

"Very well, we'll wait for her successor," calmly declared the undaunted widow.

"Would it not be safer to take passage by an

American ship?" ventured Mrs. Warren, adding:

"You know this terrible pirate never attacks American vessels."

"And we must wait so long," urged Gertrude.

But no, Mrs. Drexel was firm (?) in her resolution, and, until the arrival of the successor of the Royal Oak, neither she, nor those belonging to her, should leave Boston.

At length, four months after the sailing of the lost Royal Oak, Mr. Wright again called on the widow—this time to say that another ship of the same name would arrive within a few days.

The rascally agent had opened the letter from the owners, containing this information, with considerable trepidation, but, to his great relief, found it contained nothing relative to the lost vessel, except expressions of regret.

Not knowing the cause of Captain Roderick's wrath, Wright was full of glee, setting down the threatening letter he had received from the dreaded sea rover as a joke!

A week following the announcement of her coming, the second Royal Oak—a larger vessel than the first of that name—dropped anchor in the harbor, and Captain Knowles, who was in command of this vessel, also came ashore to report to the agent.

Having transacted his business with Mr. Wright, and given that gentleman a detailed account of the misfortune that had overtaken his ship, Captain Knowles proceeded to another quarter of the town.

The captain was strolling along leisurely, when he was suddenly "taken all aback" on beholding a gigantic negro whom he at once recognized as the man who had kidnapped him.

There was no mistaking the giant negro—for it was Cæsar—but, warned by past experience, Captain Knowles made no attempt to seize him.

They were in a rough quarter of the town, near the water-side, and the captain had an idea that hard knocks instead of help, would be the response to an appeal for assistance in seizing the black giant.

Accordingly, Captain Knowles followed Cæsar, who strolled along, unconscious of danger, until he reached the inn where he was lodging, and having satisfied himself that it was not a temporary stoppage, placed a man on guard, while he summoned a half-dozen officers.

It took a long time to collect the force Captain Knowles deemed necessary, and when they reached the inn, Cæsar had finished his dinner, and was enjoying a nap.

This brought the party to a standstill. No one cared to face a man who was a buccaneer, and, therefore, undoubtedly armed, and a giant in stature.

"Maybe he's asleep," suggested one of the constables.

"Suppose you go up, and find out!" tartly returned one of his comrades.

"Do so—I'll give you a dollar!" urged Captain Knowles.

Taking the proffered dollar, the constable stole up to the room hired by the black giant, but, even before reaching the door, was assured of the pleasing fact that Cæsar was sleeping—the tremendous snoring told that.

Not only was Cæsar asleep, but when the constable informed his comrades, and the party came to the door, they found that the careless fellow had saved them the dangerous task of breaking it in—it was unlocked.

Cautiously entering the room, they found him lying on his back, his hands clasped over his head—in the prettiest possible position for the irons!

With three constables on each side of the bed, and Captain Knowles standing at the foot ready to shoot, the irons were snapped on the sleeper, who awakened to find himself a prisoner.

Finding he could not break the irons, Cæsar quietly submitted to be led in triumph through the streets of Boston, and spend that night in jail.

The arrest created a tremendous sensation in Boston, (and in New York, in another way,) much information being expected to be gained from the prisoner.

CHAPTER XV.

FRIENDS AT WORK.

FOUR days after Cæsar's capture, a party of four widely different persons arrived in a post-chaise from New York.

The most imposing looking of the party, and a youth of sixteen or seventeen, took lodgings at the same inn, while the others took up their quarters at different hostelrys, in another and

poorer part of the town—for Boston was a town for many years after 1800.

After doing ample justice to a well-prepared breakfast, the two residing together repaired to their rooms, where the following conversation took place:

"Now, Jack," said the elder, "I am going to see what can be done for Cæsar."

"While I am gone, you will go below and get into conversation with the landlord."

"He will be sure to question you, and, as a great secret, tell him that I am a lawyer—which will be the truth, for we are great sea-lawyers, since we never fail to convince our opponents. Eh, Jack?"

"Our arguments are too strong to be misunderstood, or long withstood," laughingly replied the youth.

"Well, that will bring another question as to our business here."

"In reply to this 'feeler,' you will hint that it is regarding Cæsar. Then stop short, as if you had said too much."

"Be careful. Don't say too much, and don't overact your part."

"Good-morning."

With the last words the Rover—for it was that much-dreaded and yet sought-for mysterious being—quitted the room, leaving Jack Durant to perform his part of the scheme to obtain the release of Cæsar.

It was night when the Rover returned to the inn, and from the curious though respectful glances bestowed upon him as he entered, it was evident that Jack had done his work well.

Jack looked up inquiringly as the captain entered their rooms, but the latter merely said "Good-evening," and with a weary sigh threw himself on a lounge—so the youth held his peace.

The triumphant smile that played around his companion's mouth, told that the day had not been spent for nothing—and that was all Jack cared about for the present.

"I'll hear the story of what has been done before long," thought the youth.

Nor was he mistaken in this comforting reflection, which came from experience.

In a little while the Rover arose, and told him to order their supper, adding:

"And a bottle of the best Burgundy at once, Jack, for I'm thoroughly exhausted."

"But, we will soon have Cæsar on board the Scourge," he continued, arising and pacing the floor, after a servant had taken the order.

"I'm heartily glad to hear it, sir!" exclaimed Jack, astonished at the quick success of his superior's plans.

"It didn't take you long to fix it, captain," he continued, with an admiring smile.

"No, I had less trouble than might have been expected."

"Riggs has found the master of a schooner, who will swear that Cæsar was away with him, on a cruise to Jamaica, at the time the Royal Oak was here (!)."

"Parson Bowling, our worthy boatswain, has succeeded in hunting up a half-dozen sailors (belonging to a Canadian fishing-craft), who have been Cæsar's shipmates ever since his return from Jamaica (!)."

"So, you see, Jack, Captain Knowles must be mistaken."

Jack stared, then smiled—and, then, burst into a hearty laugh.

He, now, fully understood the ironical language of his captain, and was delighted with the latter's success.

"What! You doubt it?" exclaimed the Rover, in tones of mock reproach.

"I assure you it is so," he continued, "for I have it from the learned judge before whom the prisoner will be tried."

"I called upon this representative of justice, this afternoon, and when the facts, (and fifty English sovereigns,) were laid before him, he declared it was, in his opinion, undoubtedly a case of mistaken identity."

The mere idea of there being any possibility of mistaking Cæsar for another, caused a second laughing outburst on Jack's part.

The Rover smiled, poured out a glass of wine, and when Jack recovered himself, continued:

"At first, the rascally hypocrite—or rather the learned gentleman—would not listen to an *ex-parte* statement, but luckily, (for himself,) allowed me to persuade him to do so—and, now, the trial will be a mere matter of form, or, more properly speaking, a farce!"

This was the Rover's method of informing Jack of the success of his plans—and he appeared to enjoy the recital just as much as did his young companion.

CHAPTER XVI.

JOHN SMITH'S CALLERS.

THE supper which Jack had ordered was served just as the captain finished his story, and they were still eating when a waiter entered to announce:

"Two gentlemen below to see Mr. John Smith!"

With characteristic audacity, the Rover had adopted the name of his famous schooner, and registered as John Smith.

This was a most dangerous proceeding, since as counsel (?) for a man accused of being one of the crew of the John Smith, it would attract attention to him.

He had not followed the usual maxim of buccaneers—"dead men tell no tales"—and, consequently, was liable to be recognized and arrested at any moment.

The two men below *might* be officers of the law, and no one knew it better than the man, who without a moment's hesitation, said:

"We will be through in a few minutes."

"When I ring, return and clear this table, and then show the gentlemen up."

"It's Riggs and Bowling?" questioned Jack.

"Possibly, but when I came here, I left them for the night."

A great friendship—an affection on Jack's side—had grown up between these two, and alarmed by what he heard, and knowing the danger, Jack suggested:

"Suppose I take a look at them?"

Fully realizing and appreciating the motive that prompted the suggestion, the Rover, with a kindly smile, replied:

"Thank you, Jack, but it's not worth the trouble."

"If any one wishes to see me, I'm not the man to balk him—or them."

Jack's appetite was gone, and the meal being finished, the Rover rung for the waiter, who quickly appeared and cleared off the table, favoring the pair with a curious glance as he left the room.

Both caught the glance, and though the captain made no sign, except to place a pair of pistols on the table, behind which he sat facing the door, it rendered Jack very uneasy.

"Let me go down, please!" he urged.

For the first time the Rover seemed to realize that Jack might be in danger, as well as himself, but he did not misunderstand his young friend's anxiety.

"Too late, Jack!" he said, adding, kindly:

"But you must not involve yourself in any trouble that may arise."

"Open a window, and stand ready to jump if they are not friends."

Jack never stirred.

"Open a window, I say!" sternly commanded the Rover.

Jack arose, opened a window, and returned to his chair, saying:

"I've opened the window, as you ordered, but you can't make me run away."

Heavy footsteps were now heard ascending the stairs, and coming along the passage to the door.

"Three!" declared the captain, counting the feet as they struck the floor, and to Jack:

"Since you *will* stay, look to your pistols."

As he spoke, there came a heavy rap on the door.

"Come in!" responded the deep-toned voice of the Rover.

To the intense relief of Jack, when the door swung open, it was Riggs and Bowling who entered.

They had been escorted to the door by the waiter, who, frightened by the stern command to enter, forgot his curiosity, and fled.

Jack greeted his friends' appearance with an exclamation of joyous relief.

The Rover, on the contrary, looked angry and frowned as he glanced from one to the other, but said nothing.

"Go ahead!" commanded Riggs, as he closed the door.

"Beggin' yer pardon, sir, you're the best hand at readin' the log," returned the "Parson."

"Very well! See that you *do* keep your mouth shut!"

The second lieutenant was angry, and spoke so savagely that the "Parson" shrunk back, while the others looked surprised.

Never before had Riggs given his captain reason to frown, and now he was furiously angry with his companion and himself, because he had allowed himself to be persuaded to disobey positive orders, by visiting the inn.

"It's no use saying I'm sorry for coming here," began Riggs, "but the circumstances seemed to warrant doing so."

"In going back to the river front this evening the Parson noticed a ship so much like the Royal Oak, that he made inquiries, and found that it was one sent out to replace that vessel."

"As the insurance people, and shippers by the first Royal Oak have acted so bitterly toward Caesar, and you are to return to New York to-morrow, I consented to come and inform you of what had been learned."

"I know it was against orders; that it may have ruined all you have done for Caesar, and I have no excuse to offer."

"Any punishment you order, I am perfectly willing to suffer!"

CHAPTER XVII.

STOPPING A RUNAWAY.

As the Rover listened to the explanation of his lieutenant, the frown gradually faded from his countenance, and when Riggs finished, he appeared to be buried in thought.

"It's another R'yal Oak, captain," added the Parson, bound to have something to say, even if he, too, were punished for it, by calling attention to himself.

This seemed to recall the Rover, who looked up, saying:

"You did well, Riggs. When does she sail?"

"In a week, sir."

"Very good. I—but never mind, you will have plenty to do, to carry out your part of the programme."

"I have not yet decided whether I shall start to-morrow, but, if you need me, send here—Jack will know where to find me."

Taking this as a signal that the Rover wished to be alone, the lieutenant and boatswain saluted and departed.

It being yet early in the night, and his captain wearing a preoccupied air, Jack decided to take a walk.

The John Smith was officered and manned on the same principles as a man-of-war, and Jack Durant, having elected to cast his lot with Roderick the Rover, had been appointed midshipman.

There was something wrong with the civilian's clothing, which he had worn since leaving New York, so, when Jack decided to take a walk, he determined to risk wearing the undress uniform which was in his valise.

Having changed his clothing, he slipped out unnoticed by the loungers in the tap-room, and soon was in the vicinity of his uncle's residence.

Jack was half tempted to call on his rascally relative, but, reflecting that this would reveal the presence of Captain Roderick in or near the city, passed on.

Passing the door, Jack noticed a carriage with a liveried coachman and footman, evidently waiting for some one within.

"He must be entertaining some big gun to-night," commented Jack.

Mr. Wright, however, was not "entertaining" any one, just then.

The carriage belonged to Mrs. Drexel, and she was there on business, having learned that evening that the Royal Oak was to carry a number of passengers.

This intelligence alarmed the wealthy widow, who feared she might lose the opportunity of choosing her quarters, and perhaps the passage itself.

Accordingly, she ordered the carriage, and taking Gertrude with her, called on the agent of the ship.

Everything being arranged to her satisfaction, Mrs. Drexel thanked Mr. Wright—who perceiving her anxiety, had charged her *only* double the usual amount—and returning to her carriage, gave the order "Home!"

It was a beautiful moonlight night, and the crisp autumn air made the drive, especially after leaving the city proper, a most delightful one.

Mrs. Drexel and her niece were enjoying this nocturnal treat to the fullest, when suddenly one of the front wheels plunged into a deep hole, causing the sleepy driver to pitch forward between the horses.

This frightened the spirited animals, and in an instant they were tearing along the lonely road, at a mad gallop that threatened destruction to the light carriage, swaying from side to side behind them—and death to its occupants.

At first, the ladies were too frightened to make any outcry, and as for the footman a being more ornamental than useful—he was simply paralyzed with terror.

Half a mile ahead there was an abrupt bend in the road, and a short distance beyond was Mrs. Drexel's handsome residence. If the horses turned, they would probably stop at their stable, and all would be well, but if they held on

their course the carriage and its occupants would be precipitated into a deep gully lying on the other side of the road at the bend.

Remembrance of this, caused Mrs. Drexel to cry to the footman:

"James! James! Try to turn the horses at the gully! Do you hear me, James?"

James made no reply, nor did he make any sign that he had heard her, and as the horses tore along toward the fatal spot, Mrs. Drexel wrung her hands in agony.

"Oh, Gertrude, Gertrude!" she cried, "we will be dashed to pieces! Pray, child, pray! May God preserve us!"

As if in answer to her words, a figure was seen rounding the turn almost immediately, and the widow shrieked for help.

The figure which Mrs. Drexel saw, was that of Jack Durant, who was returning to the inn.

Jack himself had almost walked into the gully, and therefore appreciated the danger.

The carriage was still a quarter mile away, and, after a moment's hesitation as to the course he should adopt, Jack dashed forward to meet it, drawing a long, heavy pistol—much like those used for dueling—as he ran.

"It's lucky I put on my uniform, or I'd have nothing but a penknife," thought Jack, as he stopped when within a hundred yards of the carriage.

"We are saved, aunt! We are saved!" cried the pale and trembling girl.

"Oh, he is only a boy!" moaned the widow.

"He will be knocked down—killed may be, and then what shall we do?"

Even as she spoke the horses were alongside of Jack, who had placed himself in position to run with them, and the next instant he was running along, his left hand firmly grasping the bridle of the nearest horse.

"The gully! The gully! Look out for the gully!" cried Mrs. Drexel, astonished and delighted to find her prediction unfulfilled.

Jack made no reply—breath was too precious just then to be wasted in useless words.

The pace was tremendous, and, quick and active as he was, Jack feared that he could not hold out, until the gully was reached, or, if he did, that his strength would not be sufficient to turn the horses.

Indecision and fear were traits which had apparently been overlooked in the composition of Jack Durant's character, and no sooner had this thought occurred to him, than he raised his pistol and fired at the horse beside which he was running.

It was a good shot, well aimed, and being planted with excellent judgment below the horse's ear, the animal, with a mighty plunge forward, fell dead, dragging his mate down with him.

For a few seconds it seemed as if the carriage must upset. It swayed from side to side, the frightened occupants clinging to the seats, but finally righted and settled down on four wheels.

Before the struggling horse could regain his feet, Jack was on top of him with his knee on the animal's head, but his weight and strength were barely sufficient to keep the frightened beast down.

"Out of that carriage, quick!" cried Jack, finding he was unable to hold the horse much longer, and then to the footman:

"Jump down, you idiot! Don't you see I can't hold him?"

But James had too much respect for his precious self to risk his body within reach of the maddened, kicking horse, which, just as Mrs. Drexel and Gertrude reached the ground, made a desperate effort, and throwing off the plucky youth, sprung to its feet, tore through the harness, upset the carriage, and dashed down the gully to its death.

In parting with Jack, the horse dealt him a kick which not only knocked him senseless, but broke his left arm.

"Oh, he is dead, aunt!" exclaimed Gertrude, bending over the unconscious youth.

"Nonsense!" and to the footman—"here, you cur! See if you have courage enough to run to the house, and get help and fresh horses."

For once, Mrs. Drexel had enough of her importations, and Jeems, not at all anxious to meet the just wrath of his excited and angry mistress, hurried away.

"Now, my dear," continued the widow, "we will see to this brave youth."

Her smelling salts brought Jack to his senses and he struggled to his feet, but his left arm hung limp and useless.

"I think my arm is broken," said Jack, in reply to the widow's anxious inquiry as to how he felt.

His voice, faint and weak, indicated how he

felt, as he stood grasping the carriage wheel for support, and long before the assistance summoned by the footman arrived, Jack was in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT THE CEDARS.

WHEN Jack came to next morning, he was at first unable to account for his being in the elegantly furnished chamber in which he found himself, but his arm and a sore, stiff, feeling in every muscle of his body, recalled the events of the previous night.

"They must have carried me home with them," thought Jack, and then, his thoughts reverting to the business which had brought himself and his companions to Boston, he groaned.

"What would Captain Roderick think?"

Before Jack could answer this question, the door was softly opened, and Gertrude Mordaunt entered the room.

"Oh, I'm so glad you are conscious!" she exclaimed, as Jack turned his head on hearing her approach.

"But you must remain very quiet," she continued, with a gravity which the wounded hero thought quite charming. "Doctor Norton will be here at eight o'clock to ascertain if you have been hurt internally. Aunt Drexel wasn't at all satisfied with his examination last night, and he is to make another in an hour."

"I must go tell aunt you are conscious—she is very anxious to thank you for saving our lives."

Gertrude turned as she spoke, and quitted the room, leaving Jack to his reflections.

"What a beautiful girl!" he exclaimed, as the door closed, and while the remark was fully justified by Gertrude's appearance, it reveals what those reflections were like.

In a very few minutes, Gertrude returned, accompanied by Mrs. Drexel and Mrs. Warren, and then Jack was overwhelmed with thanks and praise—looked by the first named, and spoken by the others.

"You must not talk, or otherwise exert yourself," said Mrs. Drexel, when Jack endeavored to enter a feeble protest against the praise that was being showered upon him, and he was compelled to submit until the arrival of Doctor Norton, who removed the embargo.

The doctor's practice was not particularly large, Mrs. Drexel was very wealthy and decidedly interested in her rescuer, and the result was, that, after a careful examination, Jack was declared to be suffering from shock to his nervous system, in addition to the broken arm, and many bruises he had received.

"And while he may be allowed to talk, and even get up and walk around," concluded the doctor, who had learned from his patient that he had just arrived in Boston, "it is not in a noisy inn, attended by careless servants—or rather neglected by them—that our young friend will regain his health and strength."

"No, no!" exclaimed Mrs. Drexel. "He must remain here until fully recovered, and as long after as he likes."

And so it was arranged, without paying any attention to Jack's protest that he was "all right."

Then the ladies left, and the patient was allowed to get up and dress, in which he was assisted by the doctor, who observing Jack's uniform, offered to convey any message the latter might wish to send to the captain of his ship.

Thus reminded of his duty, the midshipman requested the doctor to call on Mr. Smith, and inform him of what had happened, which the doctor promised, but neglected to do until it was too late, for on calling next morning at the inn, he was informed that Mr. Smith had gone away early the previous day.

Finding he was to be a prisoner until pronounced well, and believing the captain would be promptly notified, Jack resolved to make the best of a by no means disagreeable situation, and passed a very pleasant day with the ladies.

Next morning when Doctor Norton called, his patient inquired if the message to Mr. Smith had been delivered.

"No, but Mr. Smith apparently knew of your injury, for he left word that you were not to stir from here until I pronounced you well enough to do so," was the unblushing reply.

Knowing the wonderful sources of information possessed by the Rover, Jack did not doubt the first part of the wily doctor's statement, but the latter part he accepted *cum grano salis*—and a very large grain at that.

"He is going to wait for the second Royal Oak," thought Jack, "so I suppose there's no hurry about my returning to the ship," and satisfied, now, that his captain knew where he

was, wandered off to the drawing-room, where he found the ladies receiving the doctor's report.

"It's very nice of your captain, Mr. Durant. Some captains would insist on your being under the care of your own surgeon," commented Mrs. Drexel, adding:

"By-the-by, what is the name of your ship?"

"The Scourge," replied Jack, bold in the knowledge that there was, as yet, nothing against the character of the remodeled and renamed Royal Oak.

Michael, an Irishman, successor to Jeems, the English footman, entered at this juncture to announce that the carriage was ready for Mrs. Drexel and Mrs. Warren, who were going into the city, which probably saved Jack from some embarrassing questions.

"We will take a walk through the garden—I want to see my flowers," said Gertrude, taking possession of her hero's good arm.

And thus the days passed into weeks, until at the end of a month, Doctor Norton could find no further excuse for calling at "The Cedars."

"How fortunate!" exclaimed the big-hearted, if obstinate, widow, when the doctor had gone, after saying Jack had no further need of his services. "I was afraid we should have to defer our trip, for, of course, we could not leave him to the care of the servants."

By which it will be seen that Mr. John Durant stood pretty high in the good graces of Mrs. Drexel. Before night, however, he was destined to stand still higher.

Taking advantage of the doctor's final departure from "The Cedars," Jack, who was growing uneasy at not hearing in any way from his captain, donned his civilian suit, and informed the ladies that he must visit the city.

"Very well," said Mrs. Drexel calmly, "but remember that if you are out of the doctor's hands you are not out of mine. You must promise me to be back before night, and tell Michael not to spare the horses if you are delayed."

And accordingly, Jack, who hated display, on general principles, and especially so now, since it would attract undesirable attention to him, was driven to the city behind Mrs. Drexel's best horses.

He returned early in the afternoon, looking worried.

"What is wrong?" asked the widow, noting the change.

"There is something wrong about that message from the—from Mr. Smith," replied Jack, adding:

"The landlord of the inn knows nothing of such a message—he never received any from Mr. Smith for me."

"I must go to New York to-night, or I may lose my ship."

"How provoking!" exclaimed the widow. "I meant to have you take us aboard the Royal Oak to-morrow."

"The Royal Oak!" echoed Jack, his thoughts reverting to the "Parson's" visit, on the night his arm was broken.

"Yes—we sail in her, you know, and I should like to have had you accompany us. We are going to look at our state-rooms, and see what will be needed."

The buccaneer midshipman made no response until he found that the three ladies were gazing at him curiously, and then he said:

"Madame—if I may presume to do so—I would strongly advise you not to sail in that vessel, nor allow any one you care for to do so."

His tone was low and earnest—almost pleading, and the expression of his face confirmed the words.

"Gracious! A warning against this vessel, also? What do you mean, Mr. Durant?"

"Madame, I can only repeat that my advice is—don't sail in that ship," replied Jack, adding:

"It's useless to ask why, but the fate of the first Royal Oak should be sufficient warning."

Mrs. Drexel gazed at the speaker in astonishment, Gertrude looked alarmed, while Mrs. Warren said:

"Martha, do not forget the first warning we received, and the letter that followed it."

The solemnity of Mrs. Warren's voice and manner impressed even Mrs. Drexel, who to cover her real feelings, exclaimed:

"Oh, bother your mysterious warnings! We will not talk of them any more to-day—the ship won't sail for a week or ten days."

"Come, Jack, tell us something about yourself. When did you go to sea, and why? Where were you born and where do you live when on shore? Have you any relatives, and who are they?"

When Mrs. Drexel was in particularly good humor, "Mr. Durant" became "Jack," and she now seemed determined to drive away the gloom brought about by her guest's warning.

Every one smiled at the volley of questions—even Jack, to whom some of them were rather embarrassing.

Entering into the spirit of her humor, Jack replied:

"I will answer in the inverse order, madame, if you please."

"Near relatives I have none save two, and where they are, I have not the faintest idea."

"I was born in Philadelphia, but have lived in this city for a number of years—and—" (with a smile) "do at present."

"I have been to sea only a short time, and had no idea of or inclination to become a sailor when I shipped."

"That is the sum total of my history."

It will be seen that Jack glossed over some of the widow's questions, and passed over others, giving answers that were not asked for, instead.

But the widow detected the fraud, and, besides, appeared much interested.

"Durant—Philadelphia!" she said. "Who are those two near relatives, Jack?"

Cornered, he replied:

"Their Christian names, I don't know, but the surname is Mordaunt. My mother was their aunt—"

Further utterance was checked by an hysterical cry of delight, and the next instant the amazed midshipman was folded in the arms of the half-laughing, half-crying, and wholly-joyful widow.

CHAPTER XIX.

JACK FINDS RELATIVES AND DISAPPEARS.

"My poor boy! To think that you should have been under this roof a month and remain unknown! Gertrude! Margaret! Come—"

They came, and rather hurriedly, too, for Mrs. Drexel had fainted.

"It was so sudden and surprising to find you after so many years of useless search," said Mrs. Warren, as she bent over the unconscious widow.

"Find me? I didn't know I'd been lost," and leaving Mrs. Warren to attend to her friend, the bewildered youth turned away, only to encounter a fresh surprise from the lips of Gertrude.

"Isn't it nice!" she exclaimed, seizing his hands. "Now that we are cousins, aunt must make you go with us."

"Cousins!"

"Why, yes, of course! Your mother and mine were Aunt Drexel's sisters, so you see we are cousins."

"Yes, I suppose so," said Jack, still very much bewildered.

"Well, I must say you don't seem to be highly delighted over the discovery," began Gertrude, but Mrs. Drexel recovered just then, and saved Jack from the threatened lecture by calling the cousins to her, and placing one on either side, told her nephew how his mother had offended her family by eloping with his father, who, from a financial point of view, was not considered a fit match for her.

"I was the oldest of the family," continued Mrs. Drexel, "and already married and living here, which prevented me from knowing the details, but lack of money appears to have been the only objection to the match."

"Your father removed that objection quickly after his marriage, for when he died, it was said he was very wealthy, but we never knew anything for certain. He was justly indignant at the way his wife was treated by her relatives while he was poor, and would not allow her to communicate with them when he became rich."

"When, in a roundabout way, I heard that your father had died, leaving you an orphan, I sent to Philadelphia for you, but it appears that a brother-in-law of your father had already taken possession of you, and whatever property there was."

"I searched everywhere, but could find no trace of you, and then Gertrude's mother died, leaving her in my care, which partly made up for losing you."

"And the Mordaunts—did they know of father's death?" asked Jack, when the widow paused.

"Mr. Mordaunt died a year previous to your father, and his wife traveled in Europe for two years after that. When she returned your parents were both dead, and you had been carried off by your uncle."

Then came the question which Jack dreaded:

"But how came you to know of the Mordaunts? You were a mere child at the time your parents died."

He did not wish to expose his connection with

Wright, as that would be liable to expose in turn his connection with the John Smith, and its commander, for whom he felt a strong regard.

"My aunt told me that I had two cousins named Mordaunt," replied Jack, and to close the conversation on that point, if possible, he added:

"She died several years ago, and, as I didn't like my uncle, I went to sea."

"And your property?"

"I'm inclined to think there's very little coming to me," was the careless and misleading reply, for, while Jack spoke the truth, his manner led Mrs. Drexel to infer that but little property had been left him, and she said:

"Well, we will look into that when you return from New York."

"And now, Jack, tell me—is your captain a kind man?"

"Very!"—with a grim smile.

"I'm glad of that, for, now that I've found you, I don't want to part with you right away, and you must ask for a long leave of absence, and accompany us to Europe."

"Should he refuse you, I have many influential friends in the Naval Office who will manage it for me."

"I'm afraid the whole Naval Department would fail to affect any decision of our captain," returned Jack, smiling at the thought, but perceiving the astonishment caused by his careless words, hastily added:

"However, I will ask him, and possibly he will not object."

That night Jack started for New York, and on his arrival sought the Scourge, but to his surprise and consternation, she was gone.

"Sailed more'n a week ago, and a handsome craft she is," said an old sailor, to whom Jack applied for information.

He did not know whether to be glad or sorry, but was immensely relieved to find that the Scourge was not waiting for the Royal Oak.

"He's gone to keep his appointment with the English man-o'-war off Cape San Vincent," muttered Jack, and after a good dinner at the "Foul Anchor" inn, posted back to Boston, where he was warmly welcomed—more especially as his quick return seemed to indicate that he had been successful.

"You have obtained the leave of absence—I can see it!" declared Mrs. Drexel.

"I am free," was Jack's non-committal response, adding:

"If you would like to see your ship, I will take you there, now."

This artful reply changed the current of Mrs. Drexel's thoughts to the Royal Oak, and she replied:

"No, we have no time."

"Mr. Wright notifies me that we had better go on board this afternoon, as the vessel sails early to-morrow morning, and I will not risk being left behind again."

Having got her off the dangerous subject of "leave of absence," Jack did not care what was done, and said:

"Of course, in that case, you will have no time to spare, even if you wished to visit the ship."

"No, and it would be useless," assented his aunt, adding:

"And, now, Jack, as there are a great many things which you must need, you had better buy what you can this morning, and get back early."

"Very well, aunt, I will do so—though I don't need such a great lot."

He arose as he spoke, and bidding his aunt and cousin "good-morning," started to make his purchases.

It was late in the afternoon, when Jack returned to find the ladies only awaiting his arrival to start for the Royal Oak, and five minutes later the "family carriage" was on the road.

The first step, in an eventful journey, had been taken.

It was after sunset when the party were through inspecting the ship, and then Jack came on deck to go ashore, having learned that Mr. Wright was coming aboard during the evening, and not wishing to meet him.

"I have time to buy some things which I overlooked this morning," he explained to Mrs. Drexel, adding:

"Don't worry if I'm not back early."

And Mrs. Drexel, who was a firm believer in *Man's Rights*, bowed in acquiescence.

"A fine ship, and undoubtedly a fast sailer, but no match for her predecessor, since the captain altered her," was Jack's comment on the second Royal Oak, as he came on deck.

He took a look around the harbor, when about

to go ashore, and, to his amazement and horror, saw the Scourge lying at anchor, not a cable's length away.

Grasping the situation instantly he exclaimed: "Great Heavens! She is waiting for her prey—the second Royal Oak! I must see Captain Roderick at once!"

Jack felt pretty sure the Rover would spare the Royal Oak on that voyage, but, if not, his aunt and cousin must not, of course, sail in her, and if necessary, be told the reason.

Jack Durant did not appear at breakfast next morning, but as he never had been an early bird, while at "The Cedars," no attention was paid to his absence.

"Let him rest, poor fellow; he was out late last night," remarked Mrs. Drexel, but when noon came, and the Royal Oak was well out to sea, she sent a servant to arouse him.

Jack, however, was not in the state-room, nor had he been from its appearance.

Were it possible, Mrs. Drexel would have compelled the ship to return, but even she could not do that, and the grief-stricken widow necessarily continued the voyage.

CHAPTER XX.

A SUSPICIOUS CHARACTER.

WHEN Jack left the Royal Oak, he had formed no plan, except to see the captain of the Scourge, and beg him not to molest the former vessel on the present voyage. If the request was refused, he would compel his relatives to abandon their intended trip for the present.

"If necessary, I will swear her [Mrs. Drexel] to secrecy, and then show her the Scourge," muttered the youth, as he was being pulled out to that as yet unknown craft.

"Hello! Where the deuce did you come from?" asked Johnson, as Jack stepped on deck.

"From the doctor's hands," smilingly replied the midshipman. "Captain below?"

"No. Come down, an' give 'n account of yourself."

From the beginning of their acquaintance, Jack had been a great favorite with the first lieutenant, and now followed him down to the cabin without the slightest suspicion of danger.

"Now heave ahead!" said Johnson, throwing himself into a chair.

Following the example of his superior, Jack coolly seated himself, and said:

"There's nothing to tell, except that I stopped a runaway and got my arm broke that night. The captain knows all about it, and where I've been since."

"Does, eh? Then he's been foolin' away the time of a half-dozen men ever since you were missing," returned the lieutenant, favoring Jack with a look of suspicion.

"That's odd," remarked the midshipman.

"He sent me word not to stir until I was in perfect health."

"Who by?"

"By the doctor attending me. I sent him to the captain to tell him where I was, and what had happened, but he knew all about it."

"Nuthin' o' the sort!" growled Johnson.

"The cap'n knows nuthin' about ye."

"Then, sir, the doctor lied?"

"Somebody's lied—that's plain."

Johnson's manner was growing more suspicious every moment, and Jack began to regret not having sent a message from the shore for the captain, but regrets were useless now, and he asked:

"When do you sail, Mr. Johnson?"

"You ought t' know that we sail when the cap'n orders."

"Will he be on board soon, sir?"

(It will be observed that as Johnson grew suspicious, Jack grew proportionately polite.)

"That you know as much about as I do."

"Well," said Jack, getting up, and endeavoring to speak very carelessly, "I have some things to get on shore, and I must hurry or the shops will be closed."

"Please say to the captain that I have something of importance to tell him."

"Good-evening, sir—I'll return in an hour."

"You'll return this instant!" commanded Johnson, as the midshipman took a step toward the door.

"The things can wait better'n that important matter you've got t' tell the cap'n," continued the lieutenant, sneeringly, as Jack obeyed the order.

"It is a matter of importance—in fact two matters of importance!" hotly returned Jack, adding:

"Since I cannot go ashore, Mr. Johnson, I hope there is no objection to pulling over to the Royal Oak? My aunt and some friends sail in her to-morrow morning, and I wish to bid them good-by."

"Oh, ho! So that's the way the cat jumps, is it?" said Johnson, with a coarse laugh.

"To-morrow morning, eh? Well, you'll just sit here till the cap'n comes, my lad—that's what ye'll do, an' as I've no time t' waste watchin' ye, I'll get some one as has."

Johnson arose as he spoke, and, striking the gong overhead, summoned one of the crew, whom he ordered to remain in the cabin, and see that Jack did not leave it.

The lieutenant would have put Jack in irons—so suspicious had he become—but for the interest the captain had from the first shown in the youth, and the anxiety he had exhibited of late, as to what had become of him.

Hour after hour passed until eight bells (12 P.M.) was struck, and then the lieutenant entered the cabin.

"You can go below," he said to Jack's guard, "and send down Cutter and O'Brien."

Turning to Jack as the sailor left them, he continued:

"Ye may be all right, but this is no time t' risk anythin', so I'm goin' t' see that yer safe t' stay fer breakfast."

The lieutenant was still grinning at his own humor, when the sailors he had called for entered, and he directed them to take Jack forward and put him in irons.

"I've got t' do it—no risks at this stage o' the game," he said, half apologetically, as the prisoner went forward.

The lieutenant's precaution was by no means unnecessary, for, had Jack been allowed the chance, he would certainly have plunged overboard and swam for the Royal Oak.

On the way back from New York, Jack had reflected on his position, and on reaching Boston was rather glad that the Scourge had sailed without him, but he had not the faintest idea of betraying her character, and his doubting remarks regarding the probability of obtaining leave of absence were inspired partly by a spirit of mischief, and partly because he was not at all sure that he wished to leave the Rover's service.

But, now, sitting in the forehold, with his legs in irons, and his heart full of wrath, Jack felt very bitter, and very sure that he did wish to leave the Rover's service.

Indeed, it is more than likely that, if he could have escaped, the character of the Scourge would have been exposed to the commander of the Royal Oak, if not to the authorities.

Escape, however, was impossible, and, as morning approached, Jack began to grow more calm.

Daylight found him taking things quite philosophically.

"For soon they'll be down with my breakfast," he reflected, "and then I can send a note to the captain."

But Jack was mistaken. Hour after hour passed, and still no breakfast came.

"Ten o'clock!" exclaimed the prisoner, hearing the ship's bell strike.

"They have forgotten me—and the Royal Oak is already under way!"

Then he began picturing the distress of his friends on finding him missing, and his thoughts were by no means pleasant.

Soon, however, came the consolatory thought that Mrs. Drexel would not sail without him.

"So, they will escape being present at the capture of the Royal Oak."

This was his next thought, and Jack felt much relieved when it occurred to him, for on going over the vessel with his aunt, he had decided that to capture her, would be no child's play.

Unlike her predecessor, the second Royal Oak mounted a number of guns, and was extra well manned.

It was this, Jack had spoken of, as one of the matters of importance he had to communicate to the captain.

Shortly after the bell struck, the boatswain's whistle began to echo through the ship, and then Jack heard the voices of the men at the windlass, as the anchor was raised.

"Well, I suppose I'm in for another cruise," he muttered, "but I do wish they would give me something to eat!"

Noon came, and passed, without anything being sent him, and Jack began to fear that he would die of starvation, before he was remembered, but about three in the afternoon, Riggs came down.

He brought no food, but did bring something better—the keys of Jack's irons.

CHAPTER XXI.

PURSUIT OF THE ROYAL OAK.

"CAPTAIN'S just joined us, Jack—came off in a fisherman," said the second officer, as he unlocked the irons. "He's in an awful humor."

"No one seemed to know you were here until the captain came aboard," continued Riggs. "Did you get anything to eat?"

"Haven't had a morsel since yesterday noon," replied Jack a little mournfully.

"Good Lord!" gasped Riggs. "Now we're all in it. He's been fairly eating the flesh off poor Johnson's bones since he came aboard, but when he finds that we've been starving you—"

Riggs stopped—the prospect seemed too appalling for more words.

Jack, who knew the terrible temper of the Rover when aroused, easily imagined what was left unsaid, for it had been a rigidly-enforced rule on board the John Smith that all prisoners—even the hated Englishman, should be treated with the greatest consideration.

"See here," said Jack, as they were about to ascend to the deck, "have a bite ready for me when I get through with him, and keep your mouth—he needn't know anything about it, unless you tell him yourself."

"Jack, you're a brick!" exclaimed his companion, adding:

"I wouldn't blame you for getting all of us under his guns, to get even with Johnson—not a bit!"

Jack found the Rover and Johnson awaiting him on the quarter-deck—the latter looking very uncomfortable—and was saluted with:

"Well, my lad, you cannot complain of the warmth of your reception."

"No, sir," replied Jack, with a faint smile, "nor of the affection which induced Mr. Johnson to take measures to insure his having the pleasure of my company for this cruise."

This produced a smile from all within hearing, including the Rover, and taking advantage of this sign of better humor, he added:

"But I have something to tell you, captain, which may soon be of importance."

"Very well, come below."

"But if you please, captain," said Jack, making a bold bid for the immediate relief of his hunger, "I would like to get something to eat first. I've a long story to tell, and feel a little faint."

Johnson, Riggs and other officers, who were beginning to congratulate themselves on the change in the captain's humor, started on hearing this.

"What! Have they been starving you? By the eternal, I'll—"

"I can't *always* eat at the regular hours since I've been hurt, and now I feel pretty hungry," quietly put in Jack, which was true, for he had not been given anything to eat."

"Oh, that's it!" said the captain, looking rather disappointed. "Well, I've had nothing yet to-day—you shall dine with me."

"I thought he was goin' t' take it out o' me on the eatin', though it'd be for the irons," said Johnson, when the captain and Jack had gone below.

"Yes—he looked disappointed when Jack stopped him," assented Riggs, adding:

"Jack pulled us out of a bad box. The irons were all right, but the starvation part of it was dead against the strictest rule of the ship."

"Every man on board seems to be getting into that boy's debt."

"That's a fact an' he acted like a man this time—I didn't expect anythin' but revenge from him," rejoined Johnson.

The second officer, who rightly suspected that Jack could not resist the temptation to give the other a scare, made no response. He had no desire to spoil the impression made on the first officer, which impression was destined to be of great importance to many people on that, and other ships.

"It's looking squally," said Riggs, glad of an excuse to change the conversation; "shall you or I go down to tell him?"

"I'll go," replied Johnson, who was full of bulldog courage, and feared that if he sent Riggs, the latter would think he was afraid to go himself.

Meantime, while eating, Jack had informed the captain that the Royal Oak carried ten guns and an unusually large crew, as well as plenty of small-arms.

He then proceeded to relate his own story, to which the Rover listened attentively, and when Jack finished, said:

"He did very wrong to detain you, and I shall take advantage the first opportunity to send you home."

Johnson now came down to report the change

in the weather, and was standing at the cabin door when the captain continued:

"Johnson is a very good sailor, but he is not fitted for the important position he is in. I must see about it."

"What did he say?" asked Riggs, when his superior appeared on deck a minute or two later.

"Nuthin'! They're still eatin', an' I didn't want t' bother them," replied Johnson, adding:

"You can go down after a bit; he's not mad with you."

"Ay, ay, sir!" returned Riggs cheerfully. "Don't you think I'd better go at once? It looks ugly."

"Yes—if ye like. I don't care!"

And as Riggs, looking surprised at this reckless reply, went below, the lieutenant continued:

"Not fitted for my station, ain't I? Well, we'll see about *that*! Just wait till we take that ship!"

In a few minutes, Riggs returned to the deck, accompanied by Jack and the captain.

"A good omen, Riggs!" exclaimed the latter, after a sweeping survey of sky and water.

"We are going to have just such a gale as preceded the taking of the first Royal Oak—and you had better get ready for it at once, sir."

The order was addressed in a rather sharp tone to Johnson, who, with a sullen "Ay, ay, sir!" issued the requisite orders to shorten sail, which was barely accomplished when the storm burst.

"That's our ship dead ahead, is it not, Johnson?" shouted the captain, as the lieutenant came aft, referring to a vessel about two miles away.

He had already forgotten his anger, and his tone was kind and friendly, but Johnson's reply in the affirmative was as distant and sullen as the speaker could dare.

As the gale increased, the Scourge bowed lower, appearing to recline in the bed of water, which rose under her lee nearly to the scuppers. On the other side, the planks and polished copper lay bare for many feet, though often washed by the waves that came sweeping along her length, green and angrily, still capped, as usual, with crests of foam.

For three days longer, as if to confirm the words of Captain Roderick, the gale raged with unabated fury, but the morning of the fourth day dawned bright and fair.

With dawn of the fourth day, the Rover retired to the cabin for much needed rest, but was scarcely on his couch, when the cry of "Sail ho!" brought him on deck again, to find that the Royal Oak was the occasion of the cry.

The English ship was on the weather bow, about a mile away, under full sail, and with the exception of a missing topgallant-mast, showed no signs of the recent storm.

"Mr. Johnson," said the captain, "we will try the sailing of the Scourge against her successor. Get your maintack aboard, and set the topgallant sails. Hold! Don't set the maintopgallant."

Both vessels were now under precisely the same sail, but the truth of Jack's words, on first beholding the Royal Oak, was soon apparent—the Scourge clearly outsailed her.

When the crew of the privateer—as Captain Roderick chose to call his vessel—were piped to breakfast, the English ship was but a quarter of a mile away, and Jack, instead of eating, remained on deck with a glass.

Just before the call to breakfast, the buccaneer midshipman had seen something that caused his heart to beat faster than usual—the flutter of a woman's skirt aboard the Royal Oak.

"It must be one of the passengers my aunt was afraid would secure the choice of the state-rooms," thought Jack, but he had an uneasy feeling that caused him to forget breakfast and climb aloft.

Five minutes after he had reached the cross-trees his heart gave a great jump. Two females had come from below, and joined the first-mentioned on the quarter-deck of the Royal Oak.

The distance was short, the glass powerful, and to his horror Jack plainly saw that the females were the relatives whom he supposed to have remained in Boston!

CHAPTER XXII.

CAPTURE OF THE ROYAL OAK.

HORROR-STRIKEN over his discovery, Jack remained perched in the cross-trees, wondering what Mrs. Drexel and the others would think and say when they learned the character of the ship he was in, and hoping against hope that the Royal Oak would not make much, if any, resistance.

He was awakened from his reverie by a hail from the deck, and looking down saw the Rover beckoning him to descend.

"What think you—are they suspicious of us?" asked Captain Roderick, when Jack stood before him.

"No, sir, but—"

"Go on, my lad—speak out!" encouraged the other, as Jack hesitated.

"Well, sir, those ladies, whom you can see, are my friends—those I suppose had stayed behind to search for me."

The Rover elevated his eyebrows, and, with a muttered curse at Johnson's stupidity, took several turns up and down the deck, before speaking.

"I appreciate the awkwardness of your position, Jack," he said at length, "and shall do what I can to relieve it. We will shorten sail and lay off until night, when there will be a better chance of taking her by surprise."

Jack was thankful for anything that promised hope of conquest without bloodshed, for fully one-half of the crew of the Scourge were comparative strangers, and it was these men, not as yet fully broken to the iron rule of the Rover concerning the treatment of prisoners, he feared.

Flushed with victory, with their passions aroused by the desperate resistance which Captain Knowles would be certain to make, if given the opportunity, what might not these men do?

And their example would be apt to prove contagious, for men are like sheep: let one jump the barrier, and the others will, at least, attempt to follow.

All these men would need was a leader; then, even the Rover, himself, would be powerless to save the prisoners.

These, and similar gloomy thoughts, had worried Jack for the last few minutes, and it was no slight relief to hear Captain Roderick declare that the capture of the Royal Oak, would not be attempted until night.

When the crew returned from breakfast, they were surprised to find that the Royal Oak had increased her lead, but the instinctive glance aloft revealed the cause, and, in turn, caused greater surprise, for they saw that all the light sails had been furled!

"Keep her within easy reach," ordered the Rover to the second lieutenant, (who was officer of the watch), as he went below to try, for the second time, to gain some rest.

By the time their captain had reached the cabin, the surprise of the crew had given place to discontent, and angry mutterings were to be heard on every hand.

What did the captain mean? The Scourge was steadily falling behind. Was the prize to be allowed to escape? Suppose a cruiser should appear on the scene?

Johnson was the most popular officer with the seamen, because, notwithstanding his rank, his language and manners were those of the fore-castle, and Jack saw with alarm that the lieutenant watched and listened to the discontented men without any sign of disapproval. Indeed, the grim smile that played about his mouth at times, betrayed no little satisfaction.

But no man had yet dared to question the motives or orders of Roderick the Rover, nor did any one now appear anxious to play spokesman to the malcontents, in a personal interview with their dreaded leader, and when a "round robin" was suggested, one of the old crew killed the idea with:

"Better jump over the side as soon as ye sign it. It'll be easier than swingin' from a yard-arm, specially when ye'r' whipped up at the signal of a gun."

Some doubt being expressed, the old sailor continued:

"All right; it's not my affair, but if every man jack that signs isn't in kingdom come ten minutes after he sees the paper, then the dozen that were hung and ten that were shot this time a year ago, didn't get a fair chance."

There was no further "round robin" talk after that. The incipient mutiny was quelled for the present, but it was plain that rebellious spirits were plentiful among the fifty new men who had deserted from a privateer and joined the Scourge in a body.

Little by little the Scourge continued to fall behind, until at sunset, when the Rover came on deck, the Royal Oak was fully eight miles distant.

"You've done well," commented the captain.

"When it grows dark, set everything," he continued, after a glance at the distant ship. "She is carrying every stitch that will draw, and we will not overhaul her any too soon."

He had walked forward among the men while

speaking, and Jack noted with satisfaction the change in the expression of their countenances.

"She won't escape, after all," muttered one of the new hands.

"Escape! Nothin' ever escapes him when he sets his mind on havin' it," replied the old sailor who had warned them against the "round robin."

The breeze was freshening and the Scourge, seeming like her commander, sensible of the necessity of increasing her speed, flew along like a bird, as she felt the pressure of the broad sheets of canvas now being distended.

As the Scourge brought the breeze with her, she, of course was the first to receive the benefit of it, and at midnight Jack, with a night glass, made out the chase less than two miles dead ahead.

The Roal Oak, however, was now beginning to experience the benefit of the increased wind, and moved along still more rapidly, but her pursuer continued to gain steadily, until at three o'clock the vessels were scarce a half-cable's length apart.

As if favoring the design of the Rover, the moon had hidden its face for the last quarter hour, the deck of the Royal Oak appeared deserted except for the man at the wheel, and another on the fore-castle head.

"The watch must be sleeping," muttered the Rover, as he quietly ordered:

"Get ready to board her, Johnson!"

Ten minutes later, The Scourge glided alongside her prey, and fifty men, led by the Rover, poured over the decks of the Royal Oak.

There was no resistance. The watch—tired out by their exertions during the gale, and sleeping, as the Rover had surmised—were secured before they were half awake, and those below were even more easily handled.

So quickly and quietly was the capture of the ship effected, that it was not until Captain Knowles came on deck at daylight, that he became aware of what had happened while he slept. He was received by the Rover who had remained aboard the prize—the Scourge hanging to her by a hawser—but before either could speak, the cry "sail ho!" came echoing from the lookout at the mast-head, followed, a few minutes later, by the more startling announcement from Johnson:

"It's an English man-o'-war, sir, an', unless I'm greatly mistaken, it's the Indefatigable!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE FLAG OF TRUCE.

ONE glance satisfied the Rover that Johnson was not mistaken, and he hastened aboard his own vessel, leaving Riggs, with twenty five men in charge of the prize.

"Take no part in this!" he ordered, as the hawser was cast off, and the Scourge wore round to meet her rapidly approaching foe. Then, as if an idea had suddenly occurred to him, the Rover altered his course and stood off, drawing the Indefatigable after him, and away from the prize.

The commander of The Scourge possessed the advantage of knowing every detail connected with the armament and sailing qualities of the Indefatigable.

"If I remember aright," he said, calmly watching the man-o'-war crowding on sail in her endeavor to close with him, "that vessel has six guns the better of us?"

"Ay, ay, sir—just; but, what o' that? We've beaten bigger odds before."

As Johnson finished, a sheet of flame burst from the bows of the man-o'-war, and a shot came bounding over the surface of the sea, casting a little cloud of spray on the deck of the Scourge, as it boomed harmlessly past her hull.

"He seems anxious to engage with us," coolly observed the Rover.

"Ay, but wait till he's at it ten minutes; he'll not be so anxious then," returned Johnson, forgetting his resentment against the captain and chuckling with delight at the prospect of engaging a vessel he hated with a fervor exceeded only by that of his captain.

"Suppose we allow him a chance to board?" suggested the latter, adding: "And board him, instead!"

"It might be well, sir. At any rate, it'll save the ship from his broadsides."

"Very good. Then send up our flag. It will act like a red cloth on an angry bull."

The Rover's words were quickly confirmed. Sundry small sails which could do but little good, but which showed the wish to quicken his speed were instantly set aboard the stranger, and not a brace, or bowline, was suffered to escape without an additional pull.

A few minutes later, however, there was a strange and sudden change in the course and conduct of the Englishman.

The helm of the ship was put a-lee, and, as her head came sweeping up into the wind, a sheet of flame flashed from her leeward bow port, sending the customary amicable intimation across the water, that her commander wished to communicate with the Scourge!

At the same instant, a small flag, with a spotless field, was seen floating from the topmast of all her spars, while the flag of England was lowered from her gaff.

The people of the Scourge stared in surprise, and several minutes elapsed before her commander ordered Johnson to follow the example of the Indefatigable.

This was no sooner done, than a boat with a flag of truce set in her bows, put off from the man-of-war, which made several tacks and finally hove to within half cannon-shot of the Scourge.

"That is a flag of truce, is it not, sir?" asked Mrs. Drexel who, with the other passengers, was watching the strange scene before them.

"It is, madame," replied Riggs, who was as much puzzled as his commander.

"Thank Heaven! Now your captain will doubtless have an opportunity to surrender on honorable terms and there will be no bloodshed. See! He is sending some orders to you. Here comes a boat."

Oddly enough, the widow was nearly right in both instances.

When the boat from the Indefatigable neared the Scourge, the Rover was surprised to see that it was commanded by Captain Molineaux, and some suspicion of the truth flashed upon him.

"My life upon it, Johnson," he said, "the man in the stern sheets of your boat, is responsible for that white flag."

Before the lieutenant could speak, the Rover scribbled a few lines in his note-book, tore out the leaf, and handing it to Johnson, said:

"Here! Send that to Riggs—quick!"

The lieutenant's eye rested first upon Jack, and calling him, he said:

"Take the gig and carry this to Riggs. Be lively! It's the captain's orders to him."

Jack, who would rather have faced a battery than the group on the deck of the Royal Oak, was compelled to obey.

To make matters worse, the Rover saw him as the gig shot away, and, after a moment's hesitation, shouted:

"You, Durant, remain with Riggs!"

"Now I am in for it, sure," groaned Jack.

As the gig left one side of the Scourge, the flag reached the other.

"This is a surprise, Captain Molineaux," said the Rover, taking the hand which the other extended on reaching the deck.

"No longer, captain. I am simply a volunteer, this time," replied Molineaux smilingly, and then with a quick glance at the curious, questioning eyes fixed upon him.

"Can I speak to you privately, Captain Smith?"

"The cabin is at your service, sir," replied the Rover.

The eyes of all on board followed them as they walked toward the cabin, and many queer glances were exchanged when they disappeared below.

"Captain Smith," began Molineaux, as soon as they were in the cabin, "I delivered your challenge to Sir Edward and then volunteered aboard his ship to prevent, if possible, its acceptance."

"Sir Edward has learned of your generous treatment of myself and those on board the Warrior when we were at your mercy, and he confesses that rumor has not done entire justice to your character."

The Rover's eyes flashed, but controlling himself, said:

"Well—what then?"

"I am here," resumed Molineaux, "to say this much for your consideration:

"On condition that you surrender this ship, with everything on board, Sir Edward will content himself with taking a dozen of your crew, yourself and another officer, and receive the balance of your crew into the service of the king."

"A truly princely offer!" exclaimed the Rover, with an ironical smile.

"I am simply repeating his words," said the other coloring. "For yourself, he promises to use his influence to procure a pardon, on condition that you quit the seas."

"He is, indeed, kind and liberal! But, pray tell me, does your generous commander give

any reason—further than his pleasure, why I should accept his offer?"

The tone and manner in which this was said, made Molineaux fear his mission would be fruitless; but, determined to save, if possible, this man to whom he had become so strangely attached, he made another effort.

"Captain Smith," he said, in earnest, almost entreating tones, "had I the power, you should make your own terms. Those I offer are my superior's, and such as they are, I beg you will accept them."

"To reject them, and endeavor to fight or escape yonder ship is hopeless. The curlew is scarcely faster, and in both men and metal you are hopelessly inferior to her. Do not, therefore, send me back disappointed."

"I regret that I must do so," replied the Rover, evidently moved by the intended kindness of Molineaux. "I would not forego the privilege—the pleasure—of fighting that ship for all the gold in the Indies; but, for your sake, I will say this: I shall neither seek nor avoid your boasted cruiser."

"Come," he continued, "it is useless talking further. You have my answer, and I trust we shall not meet again—at least not as enemies."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE SCOURGE AND THE INDEFATIGABLE.

WHILE the conversation between the Rover and Captain Molineaux was in progress, Jack Durant had reached the Royal Oak and climbed the ladder thrown over her side.

As the gig drew nearer, both Mrs. Drexel and her niece appeared to be greatly agitated, but it was not until Jack—looking neither right nor left—marched straight up to Riggs, and handed him the message from the Rover, that the widow gave vent to her feelings.

"Jack! Jack!" she cried. "What does this mean? You do not—you cannot belong to that ship!"

"It is true, nevertheless, madame," replied Jack, surrendering all hope of further intimacy with his aunt or Gertrude.

"Gracious Heaven! A pirate! Gertrude—Mrs. Warren—let us go!" and Mrs. Drexel, supported by her companions, retired to the cabin in a fainting, almost hysterical condition.

Riggs, meantime, had perused the Rover's message:

"Do not interfere in what is about to take place. If you see that we are to be worsted, escape if possible, land your prisoners, sink or sell the ship and leave us to our fate."

"No, by heavens! It's my first act of direct disobedience, but I will not leave you to your fate!" cried the second lieutenant, and, turning to Jack:

"What was that boat after, Durant?"

"Don't know, sir," was the moody reply.

Jack was thinking of the words of Mrs. Drexel, and the look of reproach bestowed upon him by Gertrude as she descended to the cabin, and he did not feel inclined to talk.

"There is a squall brewing in the west. See! the Scourge is sending down all her lighter masts!" exclaimed Riggs, a few minutes later, adding:

"There is the Englishman's boat going back."

"And I hope the squall will burst before they get too hot to heed it," muttered Jack.

A few minutes after Molineaux returned, the Indefatigable let fall her main course, and feeling the powerful impulse, quickened her speed until she gained a position on the weather quarter of the Scourge.

The latter did not manifest any desire to prevent her gaining so material an advantage, but, while keeping the same canvas spread, continued to lighten her top-hamper.

Soon the roar of a gun was heard, and the English flag was displayed from different parts of the man-of-war.

"A weather gun!" exclaimed Riggs. "They will be at it in five minutes."

The Scourge, however, paid no attention to the challenge, but kept on her way, now swooping up to the wind, and again deviating to leeward.

Two more shots were fired by the man-of-war, without effect, and then a third, which passed through the nettings of the Scourge.

The effect of the last shot was nearly magical.

A long strip of canvas, which concealed the ports of the Rover, disappeared as a bird shuts its wings, leaving in its place a broad, red belt bristling with the armament of the ship.

An instant after, a long sheet of flame glanced from out of that red belt, and then came the roar of a dozen cannon.

The crash that followed, mingled as it was with human groans, succeeded by the tearing of

plank, and the scattering of splinters, ropes and blocks, proclaimed the deadly accuracy of the Rover's broadside.

"Ha! How like you that, Mr. Englishman?" exclaimed Riggs, who, with all on board the Royal Oak, was watching the conflict, but even as he spoke the broadside was returned.

Both ships now pressed nearer to each other, a continuous cannonading being kept up the while, and soon were so enveloped in smoke, as to be hidden from the view of the anxious spectators.

For half an hour there was nothing but the roar of the guns to indicate what was taking place, and Riggs, getting uneasy, was about to fill his topsail to draw nearer, when suddenly the squall burst, and the cannonading ceased.

The squall soon swept over the spot, but while it lasted those aboard the Royal Oak had all they could do—although prepared for it—to attend to their ship, but, as soon as it had gone, every eye was turned to the scene of the combat.

And now the wisdom of the Rover, in sending down his lighter spars was visible, for while the Indefatigable, which had kept her canvas spread, was stripped of everything except her nearly useless lower masts, the spars and tackle of the Scourge were unharmed.

The latter vessel soon began to open broad sheets of canvas, and with the return of the regular breeze rapidly approached her enemy, but without firing a shot.

Whatever good intentions the Rover may have had, they were quickly foiled by a broadside from the man-of-war.

Instantly, the Scourge sprung nearer to the wind, and shooting across the forefoot of the Indefatigable, delivered her fire, gun after gun, with deliberate and deadly accuracy.

A crash like that of meeting bodies followed, and the crew of the Scourge were seen springing onto the decks of their enemy!

"It's all over with them, now!" exclaimed Riggs, with a sigh of relief, and turning to the acting boatswain ordered him to bear down to the conflict.

"Lay her alongside; they will want to put some prisoners aboard," he added, as the main-topsail was filled and the ship gathered way.

Long before the Royal Oak reached her, the flag of the man-of-war had disappeared, but in a few minutes her decks were again the scene of a fierce and bloody combat.

"By the Lord Harry, those fellows deserve no mercy!" exclaimed the commander of the Royal Oak, raising his glass. "They've struck, and yet they're again."

He was still speaking when the glass fell from his hand, and with a yell to the boatswain to make all sail, he cried:

"It's a mutiny! The new men are attacking the captain, and what's left of the old crew!"

CHAPTER XXV.

MUTINY.

THE scene which met the gaze of those aboard the Royal Oak, on coming alongside the man-of-war, baffles description.

The broadside which the Rover delivered before boarding the Indefatigable carried death and destruction to all before it, and when the boarders leaped on the decks of the man-of-war, the only resistance they met was that offered by a small body of men headed by Captain Molineaux. But that was most desperate, and ended only when the latter was knocked senseless by a blow from a half-pike.

When Molineaux regained consciousness and struggled to his feet, he was immediately seized by the enraged crew of the Scourge.

"Here's the chap that made all the trouble!" cried one.

"A dozen good men gone an' not a broad piece t' be got," said another.

"Yes, an' tried t' bribe the captain, too," hazarded a third. "We ought t' rig a whip and run him up t' the yard-arm!"

"Ay! ay! Rig a whip! Rig a whip!" came the cry from all sides, and it was quickly taken up by another and more unruly body of men who had found the rum and were now half-drunk.

Unfortunately for the English officer, a whip, seemingly rigged for the purpose, hung from a yard-arm of the Scourge that projected over the deck of the Indefatigable, and toward this Molineaux was dragged.

"Hold! What mean ye?" thundered the Rover from the deck of his own vessel.

The men hesitated on hearing the well known, threatening tones, and he continued:

"Release the prisoner, instantly, ye dogs!"

A hint from Johnson, who now saw his op-

portunity, to "hang him first and argue afterward," decided the hesitating men.

"We want revenge!" cried one, bolder than the rest. "Away with him, lads! We've got the upper hand!"

"Away with him! To the yard-arm with him!" was echoed from every side, as the unfortunate Molineaux was dragged to his doom.

There was no time for hesitation. With a cry to those on the Scourge to follow, the Rover sprung to the deck of the man-of-war, and, single-handed, tore the prisoner from the hands of the mutineers.

The latter, however, were largely in the ascendant, and quickly recovering from the surprise caused by the Rover's prompt action, made a determined rush for the prisoner, just as the latter was turned over to the care of Caesar.

A fierce fight now followed for the possession of Molineaux, from whose back the clothes were torn by the opposing parties in their efforts to secure him.

The giant black fought like a hero, and successfully defended the half-conscious Molineaux until his pike was broken, and then interposed his own person, naked to the waist, to ward off the blows aimed at his charge, but it would have been all useless had not the Royal Oak run alongside at this juncture.

The Rover, with his handful of men, was being steadily beaten back by the overpowering numbers of the desperate mutineers, now led on by Johnson; and Caesar, with the blood pouring from a dozen wounds, seemed unable to stand any longer, when Riggs, at the head of twenty-five men, came to the rescue.

In five minutes the fight is over and the mutiny quelled.

CHAPTER XXVI.

ENEMIES ONCE—BROTHERS NOW.

ON the deck of the Royal Oak, Caesar lies dying, and around him stands a pitying, sorrowful group—his captain, the man he so heroically defended, the passengers of the ships, and others.

For the past few minutes, the dying giant has been vainly endeavoring to say something.

"Perhaps it is a clergyman he wants," suggested one of the passengers.

"There is one on the man-o'-war; send for him," commanded the Rover.

In a few minutes the chaplain of the Indefatigable approached the group, and bent to speak to the negro, but started up on seeing him.

"After many years!" he exclaimed, in tones of wonder.

The words appeared to recall Caesar to what he had been endeavoring to say, and with a mighty effort he managed to whisper "Water!"

The clergyman caught the word, and repeated it, adding:

"Liquor, too! This man has much to say, if he tells all he knows."

"Cap'n!" murmured Caesar, on receiving the water, and the Rover bent over him.

"Him yo' brudder, cap'n," continued the negro, his eyes resting on Molineaux.

"Poor fellow! His mind wanders!" said the Rover.

"Not so! 'Tis the hand of God!" exclaimed the chaplain, and looking sharply from the Rover to Molineaux, continued:

"Ay—one was dark and the other fair!"

"See mark on him back—same on cap'n," continued Caesar.

"Take off that jacket!" cried the chaplain, springing up, and tearing off the short coat which Molineaux had thrown over his shoulder, his clothing having been literally stripped from his back.

"Is that what you mean?" continued the chaplain, turning to Molineaux with his back to Caesar.

The latter nodded, and said:

"Ole Cap'n Rod'rick say that name of ship. Young Cap'n Rod'rick have same mark. Me do it, so me know!"

The mark referred to, was a broad arrow pricked into the skin, between the shoulders, with India ink.

"If this be true, sir," said the chaplain, turning to the Rover, "you are brothers."

"It would seem so—and I am sorry for it," replied the Rover.

The first part of the sentence was addressed to the clergyman, and the last to Molineaux, but the speaker made no response to the impulsive movement and words of the latter, who sprung forward with extended hands, crying:

"Brother! brother!"

"What we have heard may be true—" began the Rover in a cold, hard voice, but evidently placing great restraint upon himself.

"May be true?" interrupted the clergyman. "It is true! I was a young man, just in the ministry, and going to America, when our ship was attacked and captured by pirates—among them this dying man."

"Almost all the men of our ship were killed during the fight, and those who were not, afterward walked the plank—except myself. Strangely enough, they appeared to respect my calling, and placed me aboard another vessel bound for England, at the same time giving in my charge one of two children belonging to a passenger who had been killed. The other took the fancy of the pirate captain, and he retained it, saying he would make him his successor."

"The father of the children was a Captain Warren—"

From the moment the Rover and Molineaux had stepped aboard the Royal Oak, Mrs. Warren had manifested great interest in both, and toward the end of his story the chaplain, observing her agitation, was almost prepared for the wild shriek and hysterical cry:

"My children, my children! Philip! Henry!"

"Those are the names," said the chaplain, catching Mrs. Warren as she fell. "You (to the Rover) are Philip and you (to Molineaux) are Henry, and this lady is doubtless your mother!"

The rest of the story was soon told. Henry Warren had been adopted by a wealthy Englishman, whose name he now bore, and Philip by the Rover.

When Mrs. Warren regained consciousness, there was a tearful, trying, and yet joyful, scene, in the cabin of the Royal Oak, which ended in the Rover—or rather Philip Warren sending for Riggs.

"Riggs," he said, "you have been a good, faithful fellow, and I owe you my life. I am going to leave you the Scourge and all that is in her, except that iron-bound chest, on condition that you put her to some other use. Good-by. Make sail on your ship as soon as possible."

So, the Scourge disappeared from the seas, and Roderick the Rover was heard of no more.

As Jack Durant had rightly surmised, there was little property coming to him through the hands of Mr. Wright—in fact none, for that gentleman suddenly disappeared, after quietly disposing of all the property he could lay hands on.

Jack, however, had no cause to worry, for when Mrs. Drexel learned how he had come to be a buccaneer midshipman, he was at once restored to favor.

From the actions of the wealthy widow, her sole object in life soon appeared to be to avoid dividing her large fortune. By leaving it to her nephew and niece, as husband and wife, this could be done, and from the actions of the young people it seemed likely her wishes would be gratified.

A year after landing in England, having made a tour of Continental Europe, Mrs. Drexel, with her niece and nephew, returned to America, but before doing so, spent a month with her old friend, Mrs. Warren, and her two sons, who had decided to remain for a time in England.

THE END.

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